

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

SECOND PERIOD. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH. (1848—1849.)

THIRD NARRATIVE.

THE NARRATIVE OF FRANKLIN BLAKE.

CHAPTER VII.

At the moment when I showed myself in the doorway, Rachel rose from the piano.

I closed the door behind me. We confronted each other in silence, with the full length of the room between us. The movement she had made in rising, appeared to be the one exertion of which she was capable. All use of every other faculty, bodily or mental, seemed to be merged in the mere act of looking at me.

A fear crossed my mind that I had shown myself too suddenly. I advanced a few steps towards her. I said gently, "Rachel!"

The sound of my voice brought the life back to her limbs, and the colour to her face. She advanced, on her side, still without speaking. Slowly, as if she was acting under some influence independent of her own will, she came nearer and nearer to me; the warm dusky colour flushing her cheeks, the light of reviving intelligence brightening every instant in her eyes. I forgot the object that had brought me into her presence; I forgot the vile suspicion that rested on my good name—I forgot every consideration, past, present, and future, which I was bound to remember. I saw nothing but the woman I loved coming nearer and nearer to me. She trembled; she stood irresolute. I could resist it no longer—I caught her in my arms, and covered her face with kisses.

There was a moment when I thought the kisses were returned; a moment when it seemed as if she, too, might have forgotten. Almost before the idea could shape itself in my mind, her first voluntary action made me feel that she remembered. With a cry which was like a cry of horror—with a strength which I doubt if I could have resisted if I had tried—she thrust me back from her. I saw merciless anger in her eyes; I saw merciless contempt on her lips. She looked me over, from head to

foot, as she might have looked at a stranger who had insulted her.

"You coward!" she said. "You mean, miserable, heartless coward!"

Those were her first words! The most unendurable reproach that a woman can address to a man, was the reproach that she picked out to address to Me.

"I remember the time, Rachel," I said, "when you could have told me that I had offended you in a worthier way than that. I beg your pardon."

Something of the bitterness that I felt may have communicated itself to my voice. At the first words of my reply, her eyes, which had been turned away the moment before, looked back at me unwillingly. She answered in a low tone, with a sullen submission of manner which was quite new in my experience of her.

"Perhaps there is some excuse for me," she said. "After what you have done, it seems a mean action, on your part, to find your way to me as you have found it to day. It seems a cowardly experiment, to try an experiment on my weakness for you. It seems a cowardly surprise, to surprise me into letting you kiss me. But that is only a woman's view. I ought to have known it couldn't be your view. I should have done better if I had controlled myself, and said nothing."

The apology was more unendurable than the insult. The most degraded man living would have felt humiliated by it.

"If my honour was not in your hands," I said, "I would leave you this instant, and never see you again. You have spoken of what I have done. What have I done?"

"What have you done! You ask that question of Me?"

"I ask it."

"I have kept your infamy a secret," she answered. "And I have suffered the consequences of concealing it. Have I no claim to be spared the insult of your asking me what you have done? Is *all* sense of gratitude dead in you? You were once a gentleman. You were once dear to my mother, and dearer still to me——"

Her voice failed her. She dropped into a chair, and turned her back on me, and covered her face with her hands.

I waited a little before I trusted myself to say any more. In that moment of silence, I hardly know which I felt most keenly—the sting which her contempt had planted in me, or the proud resolution which shut me out from all community with her distress.

"If you will not speak first," I said, "I must. I have come here with something serious to say to you. Will you do me the common justice of listening while I say it?"

She neither moved, nor answered. I made no second appeal to her; I never advanced an inch nearer to her chair. With a pride which was as obstinate as her pride, I told her of my discovery at the Shivering Sand, and of all that had led to it. The narrative, of necessity, occupied some little time. From beginning to end, she never looked round at me, and she never uttered a word.

I kept my temper. My whole future depended, in all probability, on my not losing possession of myself at that moment. The time had come to put Mr. Bruff's theory to the test. In the breathless interest of trying that experiment, I moved round so as to place myself in front of her.

"I have a question to ask you," I said. "It obliges me to refer again to a painful subject. Did Rosanna Spearman show you the night-gown? Yes, or No?"

She started to her feet; and walked close up to me of her own accord. Her eyes looked me searchingly in the face, as if to read something there which they had never read yet.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

I still restrained myself. I said quietly, "Rachel, will you answer my question?"

She went on, without heeding me.

"Have you some object to gain which I don't understand? Some mean fear about the future, in which I am concerned? They say your father's death has made you a rich man. Have you come here to compensate me for the loss of my Diamond? And have you heart enough left to feel ashamed of your errand? Is that the secret of your pretence of innocence, and your story about Rosanna Spearman? Is there a motive of shame at the bottom of all the falsehood, this time?"

I stopped her there. I could control myself no longer.

"You have done me an infamous wrong!" I broke out hotly. "You suspect me of stealing your Diamond. I have a right to know, and I *will* know, the reason why!"

"Suspect you!" she exclaimed, her anger rising with mine. "*You villain, I saw you take the Diamond with my own eyes!*"

The revelation which burst upon me in those words, the overthrow which they instantly accomplished of the whole view of the case on which Mr. Bruff had relied, struck me helpless. Innocent as I was, I stood before her in silence. To her eyes, to any eyes, I must have looked like a man overwhelmed by the discovery of his own guilt.

She drew back from the spectacle of my humili-

ation, and of her triumph. The sudden silence that had fallen upon me seemed to frighten her. "I spared you, at the time," she said. "I would have spared you now, if you had not forced me to speak." She moved away as if to leave the room—and hesitated before she got to the door. "Why did you come here to humiliate yourself?" she asked. "Why did you come here to humiliate me?" She went on a few steps, and paused once more. "For God's sake, say something!" she exclaimed, passionately. "If you have any mercy left, don't let me degrade myself in this way! Say something—and drive me out of the room!"

I advanced towards her, hardly conscious of what I was doing. I had possibly some confused idea of detaining her until she had told me more. From the moment when I knew that the evidence on which I stood condemned in Rachel's mind, was the evidence of her own eyes, nothing—not even my conviction of my own innocence—was clear in my mind. I took her by the hand; I tried to speak firmly and to the purpose. All I could say was, "Rachel, you once loved me."

She shuddered, and looked away from me. Her hand lay powerless and trembling in mine. "Let go of it," she said faintly.

My touch seemed to have the same effect on her which the sound of my voice had produced when I first entered the room. After she had said the word which called me a coward, after she had made the avowal which branded me as a thief—while her hand lay in mine I was her master still!

I drew her gently back into the middle of the room. I seated her by the side of me. "Rachel," I said, "I can't explain the contradiction in what I am going to tell you. I can only speak the truth as you have spoken it. You saw me—with your own eyes, you saw me take the Diamond. Before God who hears us, I declare that I now know I took it for the first time! Do you doubt me still?"

She had neither heeded nor heard me. "Let go of my hand," she repeated faintly. That was her only answer. Her head sank on my shoulder; and her hand unconsciously closed on mine, at the moment when she asked me to release it.

I refrained from pressing the question. But there my forbearance stopped. My chance of ever holding up my head again among honest men depended on my chance of inducing her to make her disclosure complete. The one hope left for me was the hope that she might have overlooked something in the chain of evidence—some mere trifle, perhaps, which might nevertheless, under careful investigation, be made the means of vindicating my innocence in the end. I own I kept possession of her hand. I own I spoke to her with all that I could summon back of the sympathy and the confidence of the bygone time.

"I want to ask you something," I said. "I want you to tell me everything that happened, from the time when we wished each other good

night, to the time when you saw me take the Diamond."

She lifted her head from my shoulder, and made an effort to release her hand. "Oh, why go back to it?" she said. "Why go back to it?"

"I will tell you why, Rachel. You are the victim, and I am the victim, of some monstrous delusion which has worn the mask of truth. If we look at what happened on the night of your birthday, together, we may end in understanding each other yet."

Her head dropped back on my shoulder. The tears gathered in her eyes, and fell slowly over her cheeks. "Oh!" she said, "have I never had that hope? Have I not tried to see it, as you are trying now?"

"You have tried by yourself," I answered. "You have not tried with me to help you."

Those words seemed to awaken in her something of the hope which I felt myself when I uttered them. She replied to my questions with more than docility—she exerted her intelligence; she willingly opened her whole mind to me.

"Let us begin," I said, "with what happened after we had wished each other good night. Did you go to bed? or did you sit up?"

"I went to bed."

"Did you notice the time? Was it late?"

"Not very. About twelve o'clock, I think."

"Did you fall asleep?"

"No. I couldn't sleep that night."

"You were restless?"

"I was thinking of you."

The answer almost unmanned me. Something in the tone, even more than in the words, went straight to my heart. It was only after pausing a little first that I was able to go on.

"Had you any light in your room?" I asked.

"None—until I got up again, and lit my candle."

"How long was that, after you had gone to bed?"

"About an hour after, I think. About one o'clock."

"Did you leave your bedroom?"

"I was going to leave it. I had put on my dressing-gown; and I was going into my sitting-room to get a book—"

"Had you opened your bedroom door?"

"I had just opened it."

"But you had not gone into the sitting-room?"

"No—I was stopped from going into it."

"What stopped you?"

"I saw a light, under the door; and I heard footsteps approaching it."

"Were you frightened?"

"Not then. I knew my poor mother was a bad sleeper; and I remembered that she had tried hard, that evening, to persuade me to let her take charge of my Diamond. She was unreasonably anxious about it, as I thought; and I fancied she was coming to me to see if I was

in bed, and to speak to me about the Diamond again, if she found that I was up."

"What did you do?"

"I blew out my candle, so that she might think I was in bed. I was unreasonable, on my side—I was determined to keep my Diamond in the place of my own choosing."

"After blowing the candle out, did you go back to bed?"

"I had no time to go back. At the moment when I blew the candle out, the sitting-room door opened, and I saw—"

"You saw?"

"You."

"Dressed as usual?"

"No."

"In my nightgown?"

"In your nightgown—with your bedroom candle in your hand."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Could you see my face?"

"Yes."

"Plainly?"

"Quite plainly. The candle in your hand showed it to me."

"Were my eyes open?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice anything strange in them? Anything like a fixed, vacant expression?"

"Nothing of the sort. Your eyes were bright—brighter than usual. You looked about in the room, as if you knew you were where you ought not to be, and as if you were afraid of being found out."

"Did you observe one thing when I came into the room—did you observe how I walked?"

"You walked as you always do. You came in as far as the middle of the room—and then you stopped and looked about you."

"What did you do, on first seeing me?"

"I could do nothing. I was petrified. I couldn't speak, I couldn't call out, I couldn't even move to shut my door."

"Could I see you, where you stood?"

"You might certainly have seen me. But you never looked towards me. It's useless to ask the question. I am sure you never saw me."

"How are you sure?"

"Would you have taken the Diamond? would you have acted as you did afterwards? would you be here now—if you had seen that I was awake and looking at you? Don't make me talk of that part of it! I want to answer you quietly. Help me to keep as calm as I can. Go on to something else."

She was right—in every way, right. I went on to other things.

"What did I do, after I had got to the middle of the room, and had stopped there?"

"You turned away, and went straight to the corner near the window—where my Indian cabinet stands."

"When I was at the cabinet, my back must have been turned towards you. How did you see what I was doing?"

"When you moved, I moved."

"So as to see what I was about with my hands?"

"There are three glasses in my sitting-room. As you stood there, I saw all that you did, reflected in one of them."

"What did you see?"

"You put your candle on the top of the cabinet. You opened, and shut, one drawer after another, until you came to the drawer in which I had put my Diamond. You looked at the open drawer for a moment. And then you put your hand in, and took the Diamond out."

"How do you know I took the Diamond out?"

"I saw your hand go into the drawer. And I saw the gleam of the stone, between your finger and thumb, when you took your hand out."

"Did my hand approach the drawer again—to close it, for instance?"

"No. You had the Diamond in your right hand; and you took the candle from the top of the cabinet with your left hand."

"Did I look about me again, after that?"

"No."

"Did I leave the room immediately?"

"No. You stood quite still, for what seemed a long time. I saw your face sideways in the glass. You looked like a man thinking, and dissatisfied with his own thoughts."

"What happened next?"

"You roused yourself on a sudden, and you went straight out of the room."

"Did I close the door after me?"

"No. You passed out quickly into the passage, and left the door open."

"And then?"

"Then, your light disappeared, and the sound of your steps died away, and I was left alone in the dark."

"Did nothing happen—from that time, to the time when the whole house knew that the Diamond was lost?"

"Nothing."

"Are you sure of that? Might you not have been asleep a part of the time?"

"I never slept. I never went back to my bed. Nothing happened until Penelope came in, at the usual time in the morning."

I dropped her hand, and rose, and took a turn in the room. Every question that I could put had been answered. Every detail that I could desire to know had been placed before me. I had even reverted to the idea of sleep-walking, and the idea of intoxication; and, again, the worthlessness of the one theory and the other had been proved—on the authority, this time, of the witness who had seen me. What was to be said next? what was to be done next? There rose the horrible fact of the Theft—the one visible, tangible object that confronted me, in the midst of the impenetrable darkness which enveloped all besides! Not a glimpse of light to guide me, when I had possessed myself of Rosanna Spearman's secret at the Shivering Sand. And not a glimpse of

light now, when I had appealed to Rachel herself, and had heard the hateful story of the night from her own lips.

She was the first, this time, to break the silence.

"Well?" she said, "you have asked, and I have answered. You have made me hope something from all this, because *you* hoped something from it. What have you to say now?"

The tone in which she spoke warned me that my influence over her was a lost influence once more.

"We were to look at what happened on my birthday night, together," she went on; "and we were then to understand each other. Have we done that?"

She waited pitilessly for my reply. In answering her I committed a fatal error—I let the exasperating helplessness of my situation get the better of my self-control. Rashly and uselessly, I reproached her for the silence which had kept me until that moment in ignorance of the truth.

"If you had spoken when you ought to have spoken," I began; "if you had done me the common justice to explain yourself—"

She broke in on me with a cry of fury. The few words I had said seemed to have lashed her on the instant into a frenzy of rage.

"Explain myself!" she repeated. "Oh! is there another man like this in the world? I spare him, when my heart is breaking; I screen him when my own character is at stake; and *he*—of all human beings, *he*—turns on me now, and tells me that I ought to have explained myself! After believing in him as I did, after loving him as I did, after thinking of him by day, and dreaming of him by night—he wonders why I didn't charge him with his disgrace the first time we met: 'My heart's darling, you are a Thief! My hero whom I love and honour, you have crept into my room under cover of the night, and stolen my Diamond!' That is what I ought to have said. You villain, you mean, mean, mean villain, I would have lost fifty Diamonds, rather than see your face lying to me, as I see it lying now!"

I took up my hat. In mercy to *her*—yes! I can honestly say it—in mercy to *her*, I turned away without a word, and opened the door by which I had entered the room.

She followed, and snatched the door out of my hand; she closed it, and pointed back to the place that I had left.

"No!" she said. "Not yet! It seems that I owe a justification of my conduct to *you*. You shall stay and hear it. Or you shall stoop to the lowest infamy of all, and force your way out."

It wrung my heart to see her; it wrung my heart to hear it. I answered by a sign—it was all I could do—that I submitted myself to her will.

The crimson flush of anger began to fade out of her face, as I went back, and took my chair in silence. She waited a little, and steadied herself. When she went on, but one sign of

feeling was discernible in her. She spoke without looking at me. Her hands were fast clasped in her lap, and her eyes were fixed on the ground.

"I ought to have done you the common justice to explain myself," she said, repeating my own words. "You shall see whether I did try to do you justice, or not. I told you just now that I never slept, and never returned to my bed, after you had left my sitting-room. It's useless to trouble you by dwelling on what I thought—you wouldn't understand my thoughts—I will only tell you what I did, when time enough had passed to help me to recover myself. I refrained from alarming the house, and telling everybody what had happened—as I ought to have done. In spite of what I had seen, I was fond enough of you to believe—no matter what!—any impossibility, rather than admit it to my own mind that you were deliberately a thief. I thought and thought—and I ended in writing to you."

"I never received the letter."

"I know you never received it. Wait a little, and you shall hear why. My letter would have told you nothing openly. It would not have ruined you for life, if it had fallen into some other person's hands. It would only have said—in a manner which you yourself could not possibly have mistaken—that I had reason to know you were in debt, and that it was in my experience and in my mother's experience of you, that you were not very discreet, or very scrupulous about how you got money when you wanted it. You would have remembered the visit of the French lawyer, and you would have known what I referred to. If you had read on with some interest after that, you would have come to an offer I had to make to you—the offer, privately (not a word, mind, to be said openly about it between us!), of the loan of as large a sum of money as I could get.—And I would have got it!" she exclaimed, her colour beginning to rise again, and her eyes looking up at me once more. "I would have pledged the Diamond myself, if I could have got the money in no other way! In those words, I wrote to you. Wait! I did more than that. I arranged with Penelope to give you the letter when nobody was near. I planned to shut myself into my bedroom, and to have the sitting-room left open and empty all the morning. And I hoped—with all my heart and soul I hoped!—that you would take the opportunity, and put the Diamond back secretly in the drawer."

I attempted to speak. She lifted her hand impatiently, and stopped me. In the rapid alternations of her temper, her anger was beginning to rise again. She got up from her chair, and approached me.

"I know what you are going to say," she went on. "You are going to remind me again that you never received my letter. I can tell you why. I tore it up."

"For what reason?" I asked.

"For the best of reasons. I preferred tearing it up to throwing it away upon such a man as you! What was the first news that reached

me in the morning? Just as my little plan was complete, what did I hear? I heard that you—you!!!—were the foremost person in the house in fetching the police. You were the active man; you were the leader; you were working harder than any of them to recover the jewel! You even carried your audacity far enough to ask to speak to *me* about the loss of the Diamond—the Diamond which you yourself had stolen; the Diamond which was all the time in your own hands! After that proof of your horrible falseness and cunning, I tore up my letter. But even then—even when I was maddened by the searching and questioning of the policeman, whom *you* had sent in—even then, there was some infatuation in my mind which wouldn't let me give you up. I said to myself, 'He has played his vile farce before everybody else in the house. Let me try if he can play it before Me.' Somebody told me you were on the terrace. I went down to the terrace. I forced myself to look at you; I forced myself to speak to you. Have you forgotten what I said?"

I might have answered that I remembered every word of it. But what purpose, at that moment, would the answer have served?

How could I tell her that what she had said had astonished me, had distressed me, had suggested to me that she was in a state of dangerous nervous excitement, had even roused a moment's doubt in my mind whether the loss of the jewel was as much a mystery to her as to the rest of us—but had never once given me so much as a glimpse at the truth? Without the shadow of a proof to produce in vindication of my innocence, how could I persuade her that I knew no more than the veriest stranger could have known of what was really in her thoughts when she spoke to me on the terrace?

"It may suit your convenience to forget; it suits my convenience to remember," she went on. "I know what I said—for I considered it with myself, before I said it. I gave you one opportunity after another of owning the truth. I left nothing unsaid that I *could* say—short of actually telling you that I knew you had committed the theft. And all the return you made, was to look at me with your vile pretence of astonishment, and your false face of innocence—just as you have looked at me to-day; just as you are looking at me now! I left you, that morning, knowing you at last for what you were—for what you are—as base a wretch as ever walked the earth!"

"If you had spoken out at the time, you might have left me, Rachel, knowing that you had cruelly wronged an innocent man."

"If I had spoken out before other people," she retorted, with another burst of indignation, "you would have been disgraced for life! If I had spoken out to no ears but your's, you would have denied it, as you are denying it now! Do you think I should have believed you? Would a man hesitate at a lie, who had done what I saw *you* do—who had behaved about it

afterwards, as I saw you behave? I tell you again, I shrank from the horror of hearing you lie, after the horror of seeing you thieve. You talk as if this was a misunderstanding which a few words might have set right! Well! the misunderstanding is at an end. Is the thing set right? No! the thing is just where it was. I don't believe you *now*! I don't believe you found the nightgown, I don't believe in Rosanna Spearman's letter, I don't believe a word you have said. You stole it—I saw you! You affected to help the police—I saw you! You pledged the Diamond to the money-lender in London—I am sure of it! You cast the suspicion of your disgrace (thanks to my base silence!) on an innocent man! You fled to the Continent with your plunder the next morning! After all that villainess, there was but one thing more you *could* do. You could come here, with a last falsehood on your lips—you could come here, and tell me that I have wronged you!"

If I had stayed a moment more, I know not what words might have escaped me which I should have remembered with vain repentance and regret. I passed by her, and opened the door for the second time. For the second time—with the frantic perversity of a roused woman—she caught me by the arm, and barred my way out.

"Let me go, Rachel," I said. "It will be better for both of us. Let me go."

The hysterical passion swelled in her bosom—her quickened convulsive breathing almost beat on my face, as she held me back at the door.

"Why did you come here?" she persisted, desperately. "I ask you again—why did you come here? Are you afraid I shall expose you? Now you are a rich man, now you have got a place in the world, now you may marry the best lady in the land—are you afraid I shall say the words which I have never said yet to anybody but you? I can't say the words! I can't expose you! I am worse, if worse can be, than you are yourself." Sobs and tears burst from her. She struggled with them fiercely; she held me more and more firmly. "I can't tear you out of my heart," she said, "even now! You may trich in the shameful, shameful weakness which can only struggle against you in this way!" She suddenly let go of me—she threw up her hands, and wrung them frantically in the air. "Any other woman living would shrink from the disgrace of touching him!" she exclaimed. "Oh, God! I despise myself even more heartily than I despise *him*!"

The tears were forcing their way into my eyes, in spite of me—the horror of it was to be endured no longer.

"You shall know that you have wronged me, yet," I said. "Or you shall never see me again!"

With those words, I left her. She started up from the chair on which she had dropped the moment before: she started up—the noble creature!—and followed me across the outer room, with a last merciful word at parting.

"Franklin!" she said, "I forgive you! Oh, Franklin! Franklin! we shall never meet again. Say you forgive me!"

I turned, so as to let my face show her that I was past speaking—I turned, and waved my hand, and saw her dimly, as in a vision, through the tears that had conquered me at last.

The next moment, the worst bitterness of it was over. I was out in the garden again. I saw her, and heard her, no more.

BIRD-EYE PARIS.

I. THE GREAT HOTEL.

THE rather serious business of "visiting" one's baggage duly performed in the great gloomy Hall of Customs, at the mosque-like station "of the North," the heavy streets of a commercial tone that radiate from it, judiciously depress the soul and prepare it for a brilliant rebound. Of a sudden comes a sweep round a corner, with a crack of the whip, like the tap of harlequin's sword on the canvas, then the slate-coloured gate of St. Denis, alive with the pigtail glories of the great Louis, passes away like a scene, and the real glories and decorations of the gayest and most theatrical of cities set in. That is always the most welcome of moments, when we debouch on the boulevards. We see the airy trees, the broad streets, the noble and dignified houses, rising, with tier after tier of balcony, which seem all chocolate and gold; we see the Moorish kiosques, the little temples where the newspapers are sold, the glitter of the cafés with glimpses of crystal halls beyond; and the bright stream of men and women passing and repassing, never ceasing, never halting, always glittering like a broad ribbon shot with every known colour. This is an old theme, but that first sight of Paris is ever new.

There is a certain luxury and sense of state in sweeping along the gay promenades, through an archway into a vast courtyard, already crowded with carriages and omnibuses, strewn with luggage, filled with uniformed porters and officials, surrounded with glistening bureaux all lighted up, and whose light comes flashing through the leaves of orange-trees. From higher windows, faces look down, on a lower terrace, gentlemen lounge smoking, and lean on the balustrade. All is warm and sheltered, for overhead is a vast glass roof. This gay and busy scene is the court of The Great Hotel at its hour of reception, when all nations arrive, and want rooms.

At the "Bureau of Reception"—and everything appertaining to the great hotel seems to be done in a separate office—an English official has a hard time of it, allotting rooms, talking in half a dozen tongues, always able to know his countrymen at the first word—a recognition, perhaps, a little mortifying to them. He checks his five hundred rooms or so by a little printed list of the numbers, all on a small card, which shows him the state of his house at a glance.

The "great" lift seems far more luxurious than those at home, being all lined with crimson velvet, ceiling and sides, the artist having before his mind the model of a railway carriage. We go up at a sort of express pace—à vapeur, I believe—and not at the easy jog-trot of the Langham or Charing conveyance. A little occasional clank, like the "click-click" of a capstan, hints a good precaution in case of any breakage, when the "machine" would be caught and held by its own teeth. The galleries are all laid out in vast and most confusing rings, and the doors are so neat and slight-looking, each with its number and window, that it is hard not to think of an opera lobby, and call for the box-keeper. They are placed two together, which adds to the illusion. When night sets in, a general air of desertion prevails; the "service," which is found in a corner, disappears, and shuts its door, and the traveller has been known to go wandering round and round these blank circles, looking for the "service," and for his key, meeting no one, seemingly destined to "circulate" for ever in these awful halls. At last he hears a step, and falls in with a belated traveller, who tells him he must try the "sonnette," and shows him a little electrical "button" in the wall, a touch on which sets free a whirring alarm, and soon brings a boy-waiter in his shirt-sleeves from one of the doors. The boy-waiter has a precocious French gruffness added to the gruffness consequent on being roused from his sleep. The number is not in his beat, the traveller must go round quite to the other side of the house, and then he disappears "grommelant." There the "button" is again found, and rouses another sleepy waiter, who is equally dissatisfied, but knows nothing of the key, which is at last found with infinite difficulty. The administration must have a malicious joy in inflaming the natural exasperation of menials when "they hear the bell," and towards this end have hit on the crafty device of making it jangle on by electricity in the most ear-piercing and odious way, until the servant comes to stop it by pressing a button. Often do we see the summoned menial rushing with a look of disgust and fury on his face to stay this loathsome tintamarre; otherwise the alarm would go on to the crack of doom. This notion might be commended with advantage to our monster London hotels, where the impatient guest has to give a good hard pull, to produce a faint and little regarded twang.

About Paris houses there is rich indistinction of detail—luxury of windows, balconies, flowers, tracery, and golden inscriptions which proclaim the name of the occupant with bazaar-like magnificence. No better background could be conceived. Every house has a picturesque instinct of its own, and takes the most inviting shape it can. Above all, how bright, how inviting, the playhouses, when the doors have opened, lamps blazing, the eager audience in military queue. The police too—what sinuous cocked hats and gracefully draped cloaks!

These endless miles of new stone palaces, which the prefect baron has reeled off as from a machine, will grow dark and grimy like the old dungeon streets of the pre-Adamite Paris. But our neighbours have a remedy, which they apply in the most theatrical way. A great crowd is standing gaping, while a huge steam-engine is puffing and snorting in front of the suffering house. Men in the grand tenue, which is "of rigour" in the diving world, are hung out on little stages, all up and down the various stories, with hose and nozzles. Others scrub and scrape with a will, and much self-sacrifice, the law of their task requiring that scrubber and scraper should work in the full force of the deluge of water streaming upon him. The theatrical part, however, was a huge placard, announcing to the world that the attack had begun "last night at six o'clock," and would be concluded "that evening at four!" This preciseness was amusing, but they kept their word: and as I came by at the hour fixed, the dripping men were down; the engine was there, but the waters were gone; and the house had quite a healthy glowing air after this wholesome towelling. The process will do for bricks, so the "director" informed me; and the hint might be useful for the dark skins and faces of certain London streets, grim with the dirt of a century. But in street business we might get an old woman's face full of "wrinkles" from these frivolous French. As to watering the roads, the great cart, which takes long to fill and takes short to empty, is as sacred in the eyes of dirt contractors and parish authorities as the car of Juggernaut to that deity's parishioners. Yet that system of little light pipes, broken into short lengths and running on casters, with a nozzle directed by its operator, seems far simpler. It is surprising how deftly he directs this apparatus—the snake-like pipe wheeling lightly after him, while, as a carriage comes in the way, he turns a cock and shuts off the stream. So with this huge steam engine—enormous, mammoth-like—which, on comparison with the humbler monster that made his début in Park-lane, seemed constructed on sounder principles. He of Park-lane had three rollers, and ran, as it were, on three wheels, one in front and two behind—but the Boulevard leviathan towered loftily on two huge rollers, each his own full breadth, and, moving forward slowly, crunched everything contemptuously. This creature sought the darkness; for his works, if not evil, were noisy and inconvenient, which, of course, to the Parisian, was worse than evil. Each night, as we return at midnight, we find him getting ready—stuffing himself with coal; and presently see him grinding mournfully along, hearse-like, an elephant lying coiled within. The street lamps, too, of a green bronze, most elegant in pattern, all but taking away the mean association of gas, and which put to shame our yellow tottering, "skimpy," and most grotesque familiars, which seem to stagger tippy-like, and throw out spider legs and arms.

II. PARIS DINING.

When the Great Hotel feasts us, it becomes a very sumptuous and important business. Down in the reading salon the Americans and English begin to cluster thick, a little hungry and impatient. There is a little theatrical air in the preparations, and one feature is very artful as a specimen of *la haute politique*. Grooms of the chamber make their appearance—mutes in very shiny black and with silver chains on their shoulders in the lord mayor fashion—and at the same instant a series of blinds along a row of stately windows are drawn up simultaneously, and we see the glittering semicircular hall within, blazing with lights, gorgeous with colours, and laid out with tables of refreshing snowiness. The soldiers are at their posts, ready, their weapons under their arms. Flowers bloom everywhere, and the whole seems an Arabian Nights' scene. The hungry man, who is just leaving, and says the whole is "a monstrous imposition," stops short, irresolutely, looking in wistfully. He has a journey down town before him, but that prospect decides him. The "administration" enters; a bureau is improvised for tickets; a strange little cupboard opens afar off for coats and hats, which is grandly described as the "VESTIAIRE;" with a loud clatter the glass doors open, and the flood pours in.

It is a semicircular room, decorated in the Kursaal style, all gold and colour, and Louis Quinze figures, and the largest Algerian onyx clock ever seen, supported by noble bronze figures the size of life. Everything is luxury. The waiters are like noblemen's servants, the service admirable, the cookery not to be gainsaid. There was an ambition and variety in the courses: we had two sorts of fish; preparations with the unfailing truffles; sweetbreads and small delicacies, with sweets of "the higher order," unfamiliar to the ordinary hotel curriculum, like "the Macedonian;" while a superior *ordinaire*, which indeed so styles itself with a misplaced modesty, but which might take the title of claret—importers with less claims have done so—was renewed with an abundance that almost reached waste. More chamberlains with chains walked about in a stately fashion. The worst was the ceremony was rather too protracted—the crying evil of *table d'hôtes*; and for this two hours' magnificence, the complacent sense of being thus royally served, the charge was but the fee an attorney charges, "to attendance, &c.," namely, a paltry six and eightpence.

We may pass by the more well-known temples; "The Three Brothers Provincial," Vefour, Vercy, and the newer Bignon. Their appas is more or less familiar, and old ground. But the "system Duval," latest gastronomical development, deserves, to use the epistolary formula, "the assurance of our highest consideration." This exploitation is very significant, and has been so successful that it bids fair to revolutionise the science of popular eating. The French, it is well known, eat for

amusement sake; it is one of the many pleasures they discount to the last shilling, so long as they "have a coat to their backs," or even after they have lost the more indispensable one to their stomachs. With so many of the nation always eating abroad, and wishing to eat abroad simply and cheaply, it was requisite to find some greater field than could be discovered in the restricted and old-fashioned area of the café's. Duval, who was brought to the horizon in his fullest splendour about the date of the last Exhibition, is the new reformer. He may have taken the hint from the great Glasgow eating houses, but his design reaches many stages higher, and belongs to a more refined level. The problem he wished to solve and has solved, was to combine the comfort and ease of a café, with the very highest development of cheapness. This was attempted before, in the cheap and nasty results of the "fixed price" places, where though the cost was certain (dinner at two francs fifty cents, *vin compris*), everything else was uncertain, and mysterious, and confused, and horrible. Dinner was more a speculation as to the nature of substances than a meal. But the café Cagnag has been already reported on in this journal.

We find our way to Duval's, in one of the streets beyond the Palais Royal. It has quite a *chalet* air, and into which the people are pouring literally *en masse*. Entering, we find a vast hall, in the small Crystal Palace style, only with the *chalet* element, the varnished and stained wood, predominant, and light galleries running round. It is well lit, and is as cheerful and bright and comfortable a place as could be conceived. It is full of little tables, and full at that moment of people who are dining, to the number of some six or seven hundred. Having got a seat and a table to oneself, a new cloth is brought, never used before, which is your own for the time and shall be no one else's; and then a waiter comes with a little tabulated list which is to be *your* bill, and scores down one penny opposite the word cloth. He comes presently with a roll, snowy and fresh as the cloth, said to be the best bread in Paris, and scores *that* down, one penny. Thus we make a beginning. Then a list of soups—*julienne*, spring, &c., which arrives, excellent, fragrant, appetising. It goes down, twopence half-penny. Fish—mackerel, eperlans, threepence. *Fricandeau*—in short, a choice from a long list, at about three pence the portion, with an excellent *ordinaire* at tenpence the bottle. The clatter is terrific, the rattle of knives on plates is like the *mitraille* of infantry, yet all round are well-dressed strangers, families, in fact of the regular café complexion. And there is not the least of that rather rough, coarse, working-man air which pervades similar attempts in our own country. Everything is good, cheap, and refined. At the end the little list is totted up by one of the smartest and brightest young girls, not one of the conventional café empresses, and we find some such result as this:

	s.	d.
Cloth	0	1
Bread	0	1
Soup	0	2½
Fish	0	3
Vegetables	0	2
Beef	0	3
Wine (½)	0	5
	<hr/>	
	1	5½

Duval has no less than twelve of these monster houses through the city, and though his profits on each article are to be reckoned only in decimals of a farthing, he is said to be making a fortune. He cultivates a variety too, in the tone of each house. Thus his establishment on the Sebastopol Boulevard, has quite a Dutch air, where quite a show of the showiest, plumpest, Dutch looking women, in the most starched and speckless frills and linen, are seen busy at work peeling and cutting vegetables. Above stairs all the "service" is conducted by these buxom ladies, who seem to be the swiftest deftest waiters in the world. Looking round on Duval and his twelve houses, and his tens of thousands of diners, it is impossible not to see that there is more than enterprise and successful cleverness here; and that it is the good sense and decorum of our neighbours that are in a great measure entitled to credit. It is the absence of false pride and foolish gentility, and it is the presence of politeness, order, and decency which only makes great schemes of this sort practicable. It is to be feared that the great ones in our country, those at least who wear newer and blacker coats than their neighbours, could not descend to such promiscuous companionship. While, if they did, it is no less to be feared, that the ill manners of the class known familiarly as "cad," would stand in the way. Such is a humiliating confession, but it is the truth, that we must educate and repress our snobs before we can trust ourselves with these great mixtures of different classes. This is the whole secret of so many French arrangements for the public, which we admire, but dare not imitate; and the secret why women of all degrees are as fairly represented in every crowd as the men. The cad and snob are present no doubt, but public opinion has its iron fingers on them.

It does seem as though we can take our ease more in our café than in our inn. Here again is a mysterious problem: our great hotel having a vast café of its own, spacious, light, glittering with white and gold, and its ceiling elaborate with fine painting. When shall we reach to this sort of decoration—this adorning of our public places with painting for the million? We sit on velvet sofas, the service is charming, the waiters bright, clean, as though all their earnings went in washing. The old fallacy of the "dirty foreigner" has long since gone to the Capulet tomb of vulgar prejudices. Yet with all this luxuriance, a draft for a single franc will be respectably "honoured" in the shape of a most delicious bowl of chocolate and cream, with attendant rolls, "breads," and butter as

delicious. A workman in a blouse would perhaps hardly be tolerated, but yet humbler orders, from individuals more humble, are made welcome. There do we see also that wonderful mystery, the rusty-looking Frenchman in seedy clothes, who yet orders a breakfast of six or seven francs, taking an hour and a half over it, and reading every newspaper in the place. What in short are these eating Frenchmen who take their hour to breakfast, who sit out at the tables and smoke, and sip, who dine with similar deliberation, who go to the play, and sit again, and dress, and smoke? How do they live? Who supports them? Do they work? Do they sow or spin? It seems highly improbable; yet the thing might be worth inquiring into, for as a mode of life or profession such must be highly agreeable.

III. THE PARIS STAGE.

A Parisian lives, it may be said, in three rooms—his bedroom, his café, and his box at the theatre. Three roofs thus cover his head. Naturally, "a profession," which does so much for him, is handsomely recognised. Players are "known to the state;" its eye sees them officially, as it were, in the same way as it does the soldier. With us, they were once "his majesty's servants," and wore his majesty's uniform—scarlet and gold; but, through indifference or ill desert, that slender hold on royal favour has been relaxed and is out of date. The French theatres themselves show, by their bearing, the effect of this wholesome encouragement. They do not skulk in mean streets or show squeezed fronts, their old brick faces covered up with mean plaster; they stand out proudly and boldly, shake off all latent support, disdain to be elbowed by mean houses pressing on their shoulders. The new French play-houses are noble massive structures, lift their heads like museums and churches, and have a "Place" to themselves, with space all round. In every town in France and Germany the theatre of the place has respect; and it may be a question whether this mean and scurvy treatment of our places of amusement has not something to do with the inferior social caste of our players and their profession.

There are some few things we might copy with advantage as regards the theatres. That gathering together of all the play "posters" on one large sheet, at several fixed points, in the same type, livery, and colour, commends itself at once. Charles Lamb would have been delighted to read the eager pondering faces, wistful yet doubtful, drawn to this piece by inclination, distracted by so many other pole stars, and who are gazing at these radiant and glorified proclamations through all hours of the day. Such a coup d'œil is vastly convenient for the playgoer, and very necessary; for the theatres are not rigorous in enforcing a long run of a successful piece, and of a Sunday night a popular play is often withdrawn to make room for the re-entry of a favourite actor and another piece; so that this fatal upas, "the

run" for two hundred and three hundred nights, is not always spreading dark and blighting branches over the stage. With a bit of scenic show, one of those costly "women-pieces," where all is *decors* and dresses and procession, it is of course impossible to suspend a run, from the bands of supernumeraries engaged and who are paid by the week. The sumptuous appointments, too, cannot be allowed to lie fallow or rust even for a single night, and the manager must realise as fast as he can. But in the more manageable cases, the manager wisely thinks he has another class of clients, whose interests he must consult, namely, those who have *seen* the successful play that is running; and the performance of so prodigiously successful a play as *The Grande Duchesse* is frequently interrupted and alternated with something less familiar. It is curious, indeed, to think of the philosophy under this influence of a "run," and that actual *success* and popularity of particular pieces should be one of the reasons that is hurrying the stage to decay. For there can be no question but that to be acting a single piece for a year or longer must dwarf the powers of the actors and give them no field for variety. Farther, too, the same system shuts out a large section of play lovers from their favourite enjoyment, since, like Mr. Swiveller, in his credit difficulties, he finds various streets and shops "blocked up" and cut off from a too fatal familiarity. In the old "palmy" days of the drama there was a delightful variety, and at Drury Lane, under Garrick's management, the playgoer could have a fresh play and a fresh set of actors at least every second night.

The universal box-offices, of which there are some half a dozen in Paris, are another most convenient and agreeable feature in Parisian theatrical arrangements. They are not on the select and rather costly system that prevails with us, which some musicsellers and libraries turn to a means of speculation and profit. They are little halls, as it were, open to the street, into which the playgoer walks. Running round the sides are open models, three or four feet high, of every theatre in Paris. The name of every class of seat is visible, the number of every seat is marked, and the play for the night is pasted up over head. The *gandin* and his friend discuss the place they would like, for all purposes might be in the theatre they have chosen—select their numbers, and call over the administration to announce it. The charm of this admirable plan is, besides its convenience, that a common bourgeois can walk in and take even his two-franc pit-ticket. Every information is given, the officials of these places are posted up even in future theatrical arrangements; they are most civil and communicative. These places are open till "all hours," and it is characteristic to find the playgoers busily engaged peering into the miniature playhouses, and eagerly taking places, even at midnight.

There are things, however, about the French

theatres that one would gladly see abolished; notably the three violent knocks of the mallet which causes such a thrill of delight to run through the audience. This savours of barbarism, and seems to grow more noisy every year, and is supplemented at some houses by a final disorderly thundering of the same instrument on the boards. To one accustomed to the more familiar "ting" of English houses, the effect disturbs the nerves, and coming at such a moment—always welcome—this savage prelude routs everything dramatic. But we may suppose the French are attached to this odious relic. Again, the women box-openers—one of the few rapacious classes in the country—with their footstools and worryings about cloaks, and hats, and bills—are a serious drawback. It is surprising how the audience endures their tyranny. With the new theatres a crop of these plagues has started up ready made. But the "*Figaro Programme*," sold between the acts, is welcome; and the invitation to "Ask for the photographs of the artists" is more tolerable. For twopence-halfpenny to acquire the faces of all the actors on a card, with their names and characters in the piece underneath, is a not unacceptable shape of souvenir.

That the French stage is in a state of decay, like our own, there can be no question. French observers justly ascribe this in a great measure to the state of society, to which, according to the oft-quoted sentiment, the drama does, and must, hold up the mirror. What French morals, or rather what French manners are now, for there is little change in the morals, is tolerably familiar. The mirror, therefore, must serve the taste in vogue, and reflect the "luxe" and sumptuousness, the cool draperies, and other freaks that belong to the object that holds it in its hand, or it is liable to be laid down, and not used at all. The worst symptom is the palpable change in the Palais Royal, that erst temple of broad fun, oftener retreat of absurdity, and exquisite laughter. If the air required to be cleared, and the miasmas of low spirits dispersed, we need only turn from the convenient café, into those arcades, almost cimmerian, where are the round dirty pillars, associated with a grove of walking-sticks and leather work—and flashes of hysterical laughter do the work speedily. Now, the little grotesque pieces, too impalpable almost in their fun to be put in print, but carried off so airily by the exquisite playing of Levassor and Grassot, have given place to the elaborate hilarities of the new-fangled French burlesques, long drawn out, rather forced, mixed with official music, like the *Vie Parisienne*. The little House is as full as ever, but the *spécialité* and bouquet of the place is gone. It was a school, as were once so many of the French theatres, where the artist had to study, and matriculate, and walk on, till he graduated, and find that only the beginning: a school of precious traditions, with a fashion and colour of its own which all were bound to acquire. Now the crop of new theatres springing up

with an extraordinary luxuriance, mushroom like, has created a call for actors, who are not sufficiently numerous to supply the demand. The trained soldiers, tempted by higher pay, have deserted from their old corps. They find that there is not much interest in the pieces where their real strength lies, and they have set themselves to learn a new drill. Hence the older "schools," the brave artists who have acted together so many years, knowing each other's "ways" by heart, have found new companions. Each house is fast losing, or has lost, its distinctive character.

The system of having the prompter's box in the centre of the stage, as at the opera, may have its advantages. It may, however, be open to the objection that it would make the actor less inclined to rely on his own resources, being thus secure of support in every possible way. It is characteristic, however, that it should be rendered necessary by those great spectacular pieces, where it is more requisite to see the prompter, his motions, and directions, than to hear the text. It might be introduced in the case of veteran actors who are not well up in their parts, as in the instance of Frederic Lemaitre, the very lees and dregs of whose acting are more precious than the choice runnings of the best existing histrionics. This wonderful genius, for all his decay, his haltings, his failing memory and powers, still left the impression on one who had never seen him before, of great and unconventional gifts, and of a round and distinct character, which remains present to the mind long after. With that exquisite art which is French, and French only, he had been nicely and accurately fitted with a part that suited him exactly; an old school-master, gentle and pastoral, and whose whole life has been coloured by the memory of a loved wife, who died years before. This bereavement has given a gentle and childish tone to his mind; but later he discovers suddenly that she had been unfaithful to him. This shock unsettles his reason, and at the scene where he makes the discovery, and begins to wander, singing snatches of an old song, and then suddenly turning to fury, it was possible to form a perfect notion of what the old Frederic was. Further on, when his little scholars gather round him, and ask him if he did not remember them, one of our conventionals would have had his regular round of business ready—an immense deal of passing hands over the face, of tossing back his hair, of looking up at the clouds, of rolling the eye, finishing perhaps with a grin and much shaking of the head. Not so this great actor. He gave a little start as he was addressed, looked eagerly but naturally at the questioners with a puzzled air, and then said, with an indescribable half-sad, half-vexed tone, "No, dears, *I do not* know you."

In this piece was a new scenic device which may be commended heartily to the professors and mechanics of sensation carpentry. The programme was that a gentleman was to pay a farewell visit to a lady whom he admired, at

midnight, and was then to be assassinated as he came away by an outside gallery and stairs which led down into the garden. It is scarcely necessary to add that the lady was not single. The lover was, indeed, a tall man, of a vast girth round the waist, which, as he came to pay his addresses in a scarlet tightly-buttoned hunting-coat and buckskins, had an almost ludicrous effect. But, to use the French idiom, "That does not hinder"—sentiment fines down even exaggerated corpulence, and on all sides was heard, "O mon dieu, qu'il est charmant! Comme il est noble!" &c. The room in which he took this midnight farewell was semi-circular, and filled the whole stage; but when he had passed out, it all began to glide away slowly to the right, the prostrate lady lying overwhelmed with grief; and then the outside front gallery, flight of stairs, and garden itself began to come into view, and the next moment, when the room had finally disappeared, the escaping lover made his appearance on the outside stairs, descended in the usual guilty fashion, and was duly shot. This striking effect produced a hurricane of applause, and was talked of everywhere as the "chambre à roulettes"—the room on casters.

LUNAR ASSISTANCE.

SUPPOSE for a moment, that we are all transported to the bottom of the sea, there to occupy a position analogous, in respect to the waters of the ocean, to the position we hold in the lowest portion of the atmosphere. How can we form any idea of the tides that ebb and flow above us? Our only way of obtaining cognisance of the fact would be to measure the thickness of the mass of water overhead, by means of some instrument analogous to the barometer.

Let us now go up again to the surface of the earth—to the bottom of the aerial ocean which covers the whole earth. The same observations, made with the barometer, acquaint us with the existence of tides in the atmosphere. But here we have a *continuous* ocean, whose oscillations, restrained by no barrier, are not amplified by confinement in a narrow channel, as happens in the ocean of waters, through the resistance which continents oppose to their movements. We have, moreover, an ocean consisting of a fluid incomparably less dense than the waters of the sea. Taking these circumstances into consideration, we find that the periodical variations of pressure due to the tides of the atmosphere ought to occasion, in the height of the barometric column, variations amounting, at most, to the fiftieth part of an inch!

What now, of lunar influence upon the weather? Daily observations show that, in the same place, the height of the mercury in the barometer may vary by a quarter of an inch and more, without any great disturbances ensuing. If the tides in the atmosphere, caused by the moon, have any share in these variations,

it must be so very small that certainly it cannot authorise weather prophets to found their predictions upon changes of the moon.

But if the moon will not enable us to foretell rain or sunshine, she does help us to fix historical dates and to correct our ancient chronology.

In an eclipse of the sun, the moon screens the sun, either totally or in part, from certain portions of the earth's surface. Here, it is total or annular; there, it is only partial; further on, not a trace of it is witnessed. In an eclipse of the moon, on the contrary, the rays of the sun are totally or partially intercepted from the moon by the earth's interposition; and this privation of light is seen in the same way from all points of observation.

The ancients (who had nothing like so precise a knowledge as we have of the moon's movements) were unable to predict eclipses of the sun. They foretold lunar eclipses only; basing their predictions on the fact that those eclipses are reproduced almost periodically, presenting the same characters and the same intervals between each other, every eighteen years and eleven days. It therefore sufficed to have observed and registered all the eclipses of the moon happening during that period, to be able to announce with certainty the eclipses which were to occur during the period following. Now, on the contrary, with the much more exact information which we possess, not only of the moon's motions but also of the sun's, we are in a position to calculate and announce a great many years and even centuries beforehand, both the general circumstances of lunar and solar eclipses, and also all the peculiarities which the latter will present at any given spot on earth. In like manner, by a retrospective examination, we can give an account of all the circumstances accompanying ancient eclipses in this or that locality.

Eclipses of the sun are somewhat more frequent than those of the moon. But as a solar eclipse can never be visible over so large a portion of the earth's surface as a lunar eclipse, it follows that, for any one given spot, solar eclipses are least numerous. And if, instead of noting *all* solar eclipses, we only reckon those which are total, we shall find that, at the same spot, they are very far from numerous. We may even say that, for any determinate locality, total solar eclipses are veritable rarities. In Paris, for instance, only one was seen during the whole of the eighteenth century—the eclipse of 1724. In the nineteenth century there has not been, nor will there be, one. The Londoners were five hundred and seventy-five years without one total eclipse—from the year 1140 to 1715; and since 1715 they have witnessed no similar spectacle.

If history mention a total eclipse of the sun as having been observed at a given spot, without giving the precise date of the observation, that date may still be determined by the exact knowledge we now possess. Recurring to the epoch to which the phenomenon belongs, we suc-

cceedingly pass in review the different solar eclipses which occurred during a lapse of years of such extent, that we are certain it must comprise the year in which the eclipse in question was observed. By proceeding in this way we shall generally find that, out of all those eclipses, there is only one corresponding to that recorded in history; because that one only can possibly have been total at the spot where the observation was made. We shall thus get, not merely the year, but the day and even the hour, of the observation.

Take an example. Herodotus relates (book i. § 74), "After that, the Lydians and the Medes were at war during five consecutive years. In this war the Medes frequently vanquished the Lydians; the Lydians also often beat the Medes. On one occasion they even fought by night. Now, as the war continued with equal chances on either side, in the sixth year, one day when the contending armies were engaged, it happened that, in the midst of the strife, the day was suddenly changed into night. Thales of Miletus had foretold this phenomenon to the Ionians, indicating the exact year in which it actually did take place. The Lydians and the Medes, beholding night suddenly interrupt the day, put an end to the combat, and thought only of settling the terms of peace."

The eclipse here referred to, is known as Thales's eclipse. The various authors who have mentioned it have assigned to it very different dates, from the 1st of October, 583 B.C., by Scaliger, to the 3rd of February, 626 B.C., by Volnay. Professor Airy, by proceeding as indicated above, and taking advantage of the most recent data respecting the lunar movements, has decided that this eclipse occurred on the 28th of May, 584 B.C.

Between the earth and the moon there exists one grand difference. The earth has an atmosphere; the moon has none. She has no clouds, snows, nor dews—contrary to the theories of the elder astronomers. Kepler, and Galileo, held the moon to be encompassed with a heavy and elastic atmosphere: alleging, among other proofs, that the moon sometimes disappears in a clear sky, so as not to be discoverable by the best glasses (of that day): little stars of the fifth and sixth magnitude remaining visible all the time.

Kepler says that he has observed this phenomenon twice—once in 1580, and once in 1583. Hevelius did the same in 1620. Ricciolus and other Jesuits, at Bologna, and many people throughout Holland, observed the like on the 14th of April, 1642. And yet at Venice and Vienna the moon remained, all the while, conspicuous. On December 23, 1703, there was another total obscuration of the moon, which must not be confounded with an eclipse. At Arles, in France, she first appeared of a yellowish brown; at Avignon, ruddy and transparent, as if the sun were shining through her. At Marseilles, one part was reddish, the other very dusky; "and at length, although in a clear sky, she wholly disappeared." Here it is evi-

dent, they say, that as the colours appear different at the same time, they do not belong to the moon herself, but are occasioned by an atmosphere around her, variously disposed in this and that place, for refracting these or those coloured rays.

Lord Rosse's telescope has stripped the moon of her atmosphere, leaving us still enveloped in ours; and we have only to observe what is daily passing before our eyes to understand the changes which the atmosphere has produced on the solid crust of our globe. The hollows are filled up and smoothed over by sedimentary deposits brought down by rains; the relief of our surface is gradually worn down. The moon is as a medal fresh from the mint; the earth is as a shilling which has sustained the effects of passing for years and years from pocket to pocket.

SOMETHING LEFT.

"GONE, gone, the freshness of my youthful prime;
Gone my illusions, tender or sublime;
Gone is the thought that wealth is worth its cost,
Or aught I hold so good as what I've lost;
Gone are the beauty and the nameless grace
That once I worshipp'd in dear Nature's face;
Gone is the mighty music that of yore
Swept through the woods or roll'd upon the shore;
Gone the desire of glory in men's breath,
To waft my name beyond the deeps of death;
Gone is the hope that in the darkest day
Saw bright To-morrow with empurpling ray;
Gone, gone—all gone, on which my heart was cast;
Gone, gone for ever, to the awful Past;
All gone—but Love!"

Oh, coward to repine!
Thou hast all else, if Love indeed be thine!

TELEGRAPHS UNDER GOVERNMENT.

THAT there is at the present moment a proposal before the House of Commons for the transference of the telegraphs in the United Kingdom from private control to the control of the State—that is to say, for the purchase by Government of the existing telegraphic lines and appliances, and the placing of them under the direction of the Post-office—is generally well known. But, although the question is one of great national importance, and one directly affecting private convenience, the bulk of the public know nothing of the details of this scheme, nothing of the advantages proposed to be placed at the public disposal, nothing of the comparatively degraded position, telegraphically speaking, which the British public holds in regard to other European publics, and from which it will—should the proposal become law—be emancipated. We, therefore, purpose briefly to recount the details of a scheme which, in future times, may rank next to the penny postage.

In the first place, let us see what the Post-office proposes to do for the public if the telegraphic system of the United Kingdom be placed under its control. It proposes: To

open a central telegraphic office at each of the ten district post-offices in London. To open subordinate telegraph offices at the sorting offices and receiving offices in each district. To connect the subordinate telegraphic offices of each district with the central telegraphic office of that district. To establish direct communication between each central telegraphic office, and each other central telegraphic office in London. To establish central telegraphic offices at the post-offices of the principal towns in the kingdom, and to establish direct communication between all such central telegraphic offices and the central telegraphic office in the east central district of London. To establish direct communication between the more important of the central telegraphic offices in the provinces, and the central telegraphic offices in the west central, western, and south-western, districts of London. To establish a direct communication between each central telegraphic office in the provinces, and such of the other central telegraphic offices in the provinces as it may be desirable to connect with it. To open subordinate telegraphic offices at the district offices, sorting offices, and certain of the receiving offices in Liverpool, and to connect them with the central office in Liverpool; in like manner to open subordinate telegraphic offices at the principal receiving offices in such towns as Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds, Bristol, Sheffield, Bradford, and to connect each group of such subordinate offices with its central telegraphic office. To open in the first instance subordinate offices, connected in like manner with central offices, at the money-order offices of all places having a population of two thousand persons and upwards. To open deposit offices, that is, offices at which messages may be deposited, and the charge thereon paid, at every post-office in the United Kingdom at which no telegraphic office is established. To permit the pillar-boxes throughout the kingdom to be places of deposit for messages, provided such messages be written on stamped paper. To require payment for messages to be made in stamps, or by writing them on stamped paper, and to issue special stamps for that purpose. To make the charge for transmission from any one part to any other part of the United Kingdom, uniformly and without regard to distance, one shilling for the first twenty words, with an addition of sixpence for every addition of ten words or part of ten words: such charge to include free delivery by special messenger at any place within the town delivery of the terminal office, when that office is a head post-office; and within one mile of the terminal office when that office is not a head post-office; and to include free transmission by post from a deposit office to the nearest telegraphic office, when the message is so left for transmission, or free delivery by post when the addressee resides out of the limits of the terminal office, and the sender does not desire to pay for a special messenger. To fix the rate for conveyance by special mes-

senger beyond the limits of the free delivery, at sixpence per double mile. To make arrangements, on the plan of those prevailing in Belgium and Switzerland, for the registration and redirection of telegrams, and for the delivery of copies. To give facilities for the transmission of money orders by telegraph, on payment of the charge for the message, and of a commission which shall not be less than two ordinary commissions, and under certain restrictions as to the amount to be remitted by any one person.

That these proposals offer enormous advantages to the public, as they appear on paper, is at once evident. The remaining question is, can they be carried out? The proposers answer at once in the affirmative, adding that there is nothing novel in the scheme thus described, and that each one of its parts has been tried successfully. The amalgamation of the telegraphic and postal administration has been tried with perfect success in Belgium and in Switzerland, and also in the British colonies of Victoria and New South Wales. The proposed distribution of the system is analogous to that which prevails in France. Uniformity of charge, irrespective of distance, and with a lower tariff than that which is recommended in the *first instance* for the United Kingdom, has been tried with the best results in Belgium and in Switzerland. The institution of places of deposit for messages, in addition to the offices of transmission, and the gratuitous grant of postal facilities under certain conditions to the senders of telegraphic messages, is borrowed from Belgium. Telegraph stamps are in use in Belgium and in France. The exclusion of the addresses from the number of words to be paid for, is borrowed from Victoria and New South Wales. A telegraphic money-order office has for some years existed in Switzerland and in Prussia. The result is, not merely that the business is more cheaply conducted, but that greater advantages are given to the public on the Continent, than in the United Kingdom. Not only are the telegraph offices more numerous in proportion to the population, but they are brought closer to the population, and carried more freely into the little towns and sparsely populated districts. After making due deduction for those cases in which a place is served by two or three telegraph companies, where the service of one company would suffice, it appears that in the United Kingdom there is one telegraph office to every eighteen thousand persons: whilst in France there is one to every fourteen thousand persons, in Belgium one to every twelve thousand persons, and in Switzerland one to every seven thousand persons.

There are many other advantages. Under the arrangements proposed, the senders and the addressees of telegraphic messages would respectively be nearer than they now are to the despatching and receiving telegraphic offices: so that the difficulty of sending a message would be reduced, while the rapidity of its transmission would be increased. The pro-

portion of addressees resident within the limits of the receiving telegraphic offices, would be greater than it is at present; and consequently the extra charge for the conveyance of a message beyond those limits would be imposed less frequently than now. The period during which telegraphic offices are open daily for transmission of messages, would in many cases be considerably extended. But perhaps the greatest boon of all, especially for persons resident in the rural districts, would be the combination of postal and telegraphic facilities—at present impossible, but a leading feature of the new scheme. The telegraphic offices under the control of the Post-office would be much closer to the bulk of the population than the existing telegraphic offices; but the residents in rural districts would still in many cases be at a considerable though a diminished distance from the nearest telegraphic office. If these residents in rural districts were desirous of transmitting their messages to the nearest telegraphic office with the greatest possible speed, they might either despatch them by their own messenger or procure an official messenger, by payment of an extra charge, at the nearest deposit office. But if they were not very much pressed for time, and were content to accept service by letter-carrier, in lieu of service by special messenger, they might, by posting their messages in the nearest pillar-box or deposit office, ensure their transmission, free of extra charge, to the nearest telegraphic office at the usual time of clearing that pillar-box or deposit office. Thus, for instance; residents in Lampeter desiring to send telegrams to London through Carmarthen (which, though twenty-four miles distant from them, is their nearest telegraphic station), would know that if they wrote their messages on stamped paper and deposited them at the Lampeter post-office by 1.15 P.M., the messages would go forward at that hour free of extra charge, and would reach Carmarthen for immediate despatch by telegraph at 4.25 P.M. Thus, also; messages might be posted at Fort Augustus up to 11.40 P.M. for transmission over a distance of thirty-five miles to Inverness, the nearest telegraph office, where they would arrive for immediate despatch by telegraph, at 9.20 A.M.

It will be obvious to all who study these illustrations, that in an immense number of cases a service partly postal and partly telegraphic would meet all the requirements of the senders, while it would be much cheaper (the whole cost being covered by the charge for the telegram) than a service partly by special messenger and partly by telegraph. And it will be equally obvious that this partly postal and partly telegraphic service would in a vast number of cases serve as well for the reply to the message as for the message itself. For the transmission of a letter and the reply thereto between Lampeter and London, forty-four hours are required; but for the transmission of a message and the reply thereto between the same places, on the partly postal and partly telegraphic system, only

twenty hours would be required. So again; the course of communication between Fort Augustus and London would be shortened by a period of from two days to two days and a half.

The foregoing illustrations (which might be varied and multiplied indefinitely), will serve to show how constantly, if the scheme proposed were in operation, the public would be enabled, by a combination of postal and telegraphic facilities, to obtain a most important acceleration of their correspondence, at a cheap rate. The occasions would be numberless in which, though they might not be willing to undertake the labour or expense of going or sending to a telegraphic office, or to incur the cost of transmission at the existing rates—and perhaps, the cost of delivery beyond the limits of the terminal office—they would be very willing to expend a shilling, if, by so doing, and by depositing a message in a pillar-box within an easy distance, they could ensure the delivery of the message free of further charge, within from three to five hours after the date of despatch.

To those, however, who desire, not merely a partial use of telegraphic facilities for the purpose of a partial acceleration of their correspondence, but the enjoyment of the fullest facilities which the telegraph can afford, the system would unquestionably afford advantages much greater than any in the power of telegraph companies to give. Without great outlay, the existing companies could not bring the telegraphic offices, as a rule, closer to the population than they are at present; nor, without great outlay, could they extend the hours during which the majority of those offices are open for business. The Post-office has already the means of bringing the telegraphic offices closer to the population and of extending their hours of business.

We are a prudent people, and we like full value for our money. There is little doubt that first among the circumstances which have retarded the growth of telegraphic correspondence in the United Kingdom, is the fact that the charges for the transmission of messages are, and have been for some time, higher with us than on the Continent. France, Prussia, Belgium, Switzerland, has each a tariff, the two former less, the two latter very much less, than ours. The following Table will illustrate this part of the subject:

Country.	Greatest Distance over which a Message can be Transmitted.	Charge for a Message of 20 Words over greatest Distance.	Corresponding Charges in Great Britain for a like Distance.
France . .	About 600 miles	s. d.	s. d.
Prussia . .	" 500 "	1 8	2 0
Belgium . .	" 180 "	1 6	2 0
Switzerland .	" 200 "	0 5	1 6
		0 5	1 6

The States of the Continent have great ad-

vantage over the United Kingdom in this respect. They can afford to impose low charges for the transmission of messages, because they need not do more than make the telegraphs self-supporting. Because the telegraphic system of each State is under a single management, thereby avoiding loss of revenue and increase of cost caused by competition. And because they for the most part save expense, by combining the telegraphic administration with the administration of several other state departments.

Of course this scheme, beneficial as we believe it to be, has not been received with universal satisfaction. So the establishment of railways and the introduction of the cheap postage were both derided by The Quarterly Review and other authorities. The objections raised against the proposed plan are of various kinds, and come from various quarters. One of the chief of them, is, that the adoption of the proposed scheme would place too much power in the hands of the Government, which, on emergency—as, for instance, at a general election—might be tempted to use the information they could obtain through it, to the detriment of their political adversaries. The answer to this is, plainly, that public opinion would declare itself so strongly, both in the press and in parliament, against any such conduct, if it ever occurred, as effectually to prevent its recurrence. This point is touched upon by Mr. John Lewis Ricardo, M.P., then both a member of the legislature and the chairman of the largest telegraph company in the kingdom, in a pamphlet published in 1861. The following quotation will show that he had no apprehension:

To secure the honour and reputation of the British Government as a guarantee for the privacy of communications, necessarily more confidential than those conveyed under sealed envelope through the post; to establish a conviction that the public are dependent, not upon the discretion of individuals, but upon the faith of a ministry responsible at any moment to a vigilant parliament, that there shall be no undue preference or precedence given even to the highest financial or most powerful influence in the land; in fine to substitute the safeguard of statesmen chosen by the nation for their talent and integrity, for that of men of business, however high their character, elected by a body of shareholders, simply to pay them the highest amount of interest obtainable from the tolls levied upon the public; to retain the telegraphic despatches of the various departments charged with the maintenance of the honour, and interests, and tranquillity of the country inviolate and inviolable, instead of being passed through the hands of a joint-stock company, are advantages which no man can deny, and which parliament and the people will not fail to appreciate.

Of course, it has been said that the scheme is an interference with private enterprise. The reply is, that the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce in 1865 appointed a Committee to enquire into the subject, and that the report of that committee—adopted at a meeting held under the presidency of Mr. McLaren, M.P.—strongly

recommended the assumption by Government of the control of telegraphic communication, and declared that the obstacles in the way were "comparatively few and unimportant." And the result of the action taken by the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce was, that all the Chambers of Commerce in the kingdom petitioned parliament in favour of the proposal; a deputation from them waited on the chancellor of the exchequer and the postmaster-general; and the Chambers have repeatedly, at their public meetings, renewed their request for the introduction of the measure. Nor are the Chambers of Commerce alone in this matter. Petitions in favour of the scheme have been addressed to parliament by the medical profession, which is largely interested in the extension of telegraphic intercourse, and by the press, to which promptitude and excellence in telegraphy is of the utmost importance, and which, as a rule, complains bitterly of the manner in which this service is now performed.

Again, it has been objected that the passing of the proposed bill will enable the Government to go through that terrible process known as "putting on the screw" in regard to the existing companies and their shareholders. This is not the case. The bill is only a permissive one. It only gives power to sell, and forces no one to sell, though it gives the shareholders power to force the Government to buy. If the Government should not offer acceptable terms, the bargain can be referred to arbitration. It is said, with apparent truth, that the Government might buy up a poor company whose shares are at a discount, and by working that company at the uniform one shilling rate, might unfairly compete with the other companies, and so force them to sell against their will; but in answer to this, it must be borne in mind that there is nothing in the world but public opinion to prevent the Government from doing this *now*. It has now a perfect right to offer to the public to transmit its letters by telegraph, and it will do no more when it has bought up all the companies. The postal system, must and will, in the march of events, inevitably adopt the telegraph, or the postal system will itself be left behind, and a vast telegraph post will be forced (by the wants of the community) into existence, to compete with the Post-office itself. The growth of telegraphic business proves this; greater growth will, as heretofore, involve further reductions in cost, until, in course of progress and expansion, the price will become so low as to take away half the business of the Post-office. It being inevitable, therefore, that the Post-office, to exist, must engraft the telegraph on its system, it follows that if the shareholders should be strong enough to refuse altogether to give it the option of buying now by agreement, they might hereafter either get Government as a competitor, or be forced to sell whether or no, and possibly at a reduced price.

The objections we have endeavoured to answer, have been made anonymously, chiefly

in pamphlet form. Very recently, however, a pamphlet has been put forth, with the signature, affixed "by order of the Board," of "Robert Grimston," chairman of the Electric and International Telegraph Company. Mr. Grimston will be remembered by middle-aged cricketers, as one of the ornaments of "Lord's" in bygone years, and is justly esteemed by all Harrovians for the admirable manner in which to the present day he "coaches" the Harrow eleven for the school-matches; but the patience and discrimination which distinguish Mr. Grimston in the playing-field, seem to desert him in the study; while, in his literary style, he inclines to a system of "swiping" which is now obsolete alike in cricket and pamphleteering. It is, perhaps, rather hard on Mr. Grimston to judge him as a business man, inasmuch as on page 8 of his own pamphlet he represents himself as replying to a question from the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to whether, since the proposal of Government to acquire the telegraphs, the shares had not risen considerably in the market, "I never take any notice of the price of shares"—to say the least of it, a charmingly frank declaration on the part of the chairman of a great company. But there are two or three points in Mr. Grimston's pamphlet which it is desirable to answer. Taking the Government proposition to establish telegraphic stations at every money-order office, he says: "Now let us test the argument by this very case. In the last report laid before parliament by the Postmaster General, an account was given of the number of money-order offices established in certain large towns, and of the amount of the money orders issued in the years 1864 and 1865. What do we find? Liverpool, in 1864, had twenty-six money-order offices, and issued money orders to the extent of five hundred and fifty-one thousand nine hundred and forty pounds. In 1865, the number of money-order offices in Liverpool was increased no less than fifty per cent, namely, from twenty-six to thirty-nine, but the increase of the money-order business was less than two per cent!" Mr. Grimston apparently does not see that the obvious answer to this, is, that the Post-office gave an enormous amount of accommodation, and lost nothing by it! In reference to a proposal for a new clause "to enable the Postmaster General to enter into contracts with the proprietors of newspapers for the transmission of intelligence sent by telegraph," Mr. Grimston says: "The proprietors of newspapers are not easily to be caught by chaff, and they might probably prefer a clause which would limit the Post-office to the existing 'unquestionably low rates,' and preclude its entering into contracts more advantageous to one newspaper than to another." Mr. Grimston will probably learn with surprise that this clause was drawn up by certain "proprietors of newspapers," and was presented by them in deputation. One more point, and we have done with Mr. Grimston. He says: "The Post-office sets up 'Money-order Offices' in connexion with this

scheme. Your grace probably is unaware that an enormous money-order business is carried on by the telegraph offices. Thousands upon thousands of pounds a day are remitted by telegraph—the amounts being received at one end of the line and paid at the other. This business, though it makes no show, is, in the aggregate, far larger than the petty business of the money-order offices connected with your grace's department, the practice of which is universally complained of as so cumbrous and costly. Does the Government propose to carry on this business? If so, on what terms? At present the Post-office orders are limited to five pounds. The telegraphic companies place no limits on the amounts they receive and pay." Now, put by the side of this wonderful evidence of the wonderful Chairman of the wonderful Company who are quite satisfied (no doubt) of his never taking any notice of the price of its shares, the following slight facts: The "petty business" of the Money-order Office amounts to seventeen millions sterling per annum. Money-orders for ten pounds can be obtained at all money-order offices, and the Post-office places no limit to the number of these orders issued to one person!

To the objections that State control would be injurious to invention, or that the transmission of news by government officials would act injuriously to the public interest, we have not replied, because to us they seem too childish and trivial to need reply. We believe that the condition of things in which the State was regarded as a bugbear, is over for ever, and that as has been justly said by one of the most liberal and thoughtful of our contemporaries:—"The old dread of the State is decaying, as men become convinced that the state is but themselves well organised; and we do not despair yet of seeing the counter theory, that 'no monopoly can be worked for the national benefit except through the nation,' openly acknowledged by English statesmen; and the further proposition, that 'the weakness of individuals ought to be supplemented by the strength of all,' receive, what it has never had yet, a fair discussion."

Thoroughly agreeing in these views, and believing the proposed scheme to be one of very great national importance, we earnestly commend its adoption to the House of Commons.

TOWN AND COUNTRY SPARROWS.

WHATEVER the fair Lesbia may have done in the days of Horace and Mæcenas, nobody in our time makes a household pet or a bosom friend of the sparrow. Nor has he much to recommend him to affection or familiarity. He is not beautiful, like the canary; he cannot sing, like the lark or the nightingale; but only chirp and twitter in a manner that is not particularly agreeable; and, unlike the duck, the goose, the

barn-door fowl, or the ortolan, he has no attraction for the disciples of Brillat Savarin, and would be scorned as food by the hungriest of human beings, even by the hippophagists. But, notwithstanding all these deficiencies, I like the sparrow. He is brave and lively in his behaviour to the outer world, and very affectionate to his mate and little ones in domestic life. He, moreover, plays his allotted part in the beneficent scheme of nature, as much as man does at one end of the great chain and the animalcule at the other.

There are, according to the great French Naturalist, Buffon, who somewhat angrily calls the sparrow an "idle glutton;" no less than sixty-seven varieties of this well-known bird. The best known of the sixty-seven—all of them inhabitants of the old or Eastern hemisphere, and none of them known except by name in the Western world—are the house sparrow, the tree sparrow, and the hedge sparrow; to which I think should be added the London sparrow. Unlike the swallow, the cuckoo, and other migratory birds, the sparrow does not seek a perpetual spring or summer, by travel to the sunny south, but stays with us in all seasons. The severest winter does not drive him away, though it may sometimes kill him or force him to desperate straits for a subsistence. All the year round he twitters in town and country, and picks up a livelihood as best he can; and all the year round he multiplies his kind. The hen produces three broods in the twelve-month. Next to his fondness for human neighbourhood—for the sparrow is never found in the wilderness or in dense forests, but always within easy flight of the cottager's chimney or the smoke of city houses—his great characteristics are amateness and combativeness—cause and effect. When he has fixed his affections on the charmer of his heart, and any other sparrow presumes even so much as to look at her, or to utter one loving chirp to distract her attention, woe betide the interloper, unless he be a much stronger and fiercer bird than his antagonist. War is declared immediately, and a combat ensues, in which, as among men, the prize falls to the possession of the victor. "None but the brave deserve the fair," is a maxim apparently as well understood among sparrows as it used to be among the preux chevaliers or knights errant of the olden time. In his domestic life, as far as man can judge of him by external appearances, the sparrow is happy. He and his mate are fond of home, and if any one wickedly destroys their nest they indulge in no vain repining, but immediately set about building another; not like the waggoner in the fable, asking Jupiter to help them in their distress, but helping themselves, as all good birds, and all good people, ought to do. And if a mischievous farm boy steals her eggs, Mrs. Sparrow, instead of weeping disconsolately over her loss, for more than a very brief period of natural disappointment, proceeds forthwith to fill up the void thus created in her domestic circle by the production

* The Spectator, November 23, 1867.

of just as many additional eggs as have been taken from her.

Having a liking for the sparrow, I allure him to my garden plat by daily feasts of bread-crumbs and chopped fat. One sparrow seems to tell another of the good fortune thus awaiting the birds; and the first comer, who, in nine cases out of ten, is a sparrow, no sooner flies away to the tree or hedge, or house-top which he inhabits, with a crust or crumb about the size of his head, than down come from all points of the compass a dozen or two of his friends or acquaintances. Sometimes a mutton or a fish bone that my dog has done with is thrown among the crumbs, and the sparrow, not at all particular about his diet, proceeds to pick it, and, if it be a marrow bone, to put his bill into it in search of the choice morsels which the dog's teeth and tongue have been unable to reach. The female sparrow brings her young ones to these symposia as soon as they are able to fly, and stuffs the large pieces of bread or fat down their gaping throats with true maternal devotion. It cannot be said that she feeds her "little ones," for what, considering their age, ought to be her little ones, are, in point of fact, her "large" ones. We have but to fancy Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones, or any other fair lady of our own acquaintance, who had been married a twelvemonth, and had a baby to feed as big as herself and her husband rolled into one, to realise the comparative size of the sparrow's progeny and the mother's thoughtful care in nursing, tending, and providing for such monsters. Not that the size of the young sparrow represents flesh and blood. On the contrary, it represents little but fluff and feathers. As the young bird grows old its size diminishes. The feast that attracts the sparrows attracts other varieties of birds—the chaffinch, the bullfinch, the goldfinch, the blackbird, the thrush, the starling, and the robin redbreast. None of these associate with the sparrow, but watch their chance of hopping in for something when the vulgar little birds have flown away with prizes in their bills. The robin especially seems to dislike and avoid the sparrow, and will no more rub shoulders with him than a gentleman will hob-and-nob or shake hands with a chimney-sweep. The blackbirds and thrushes—thrice as large as sparrows—will on no account eat with them, but, like the robin, take the opportunity of the sparrow's absence to claim a share of any of the good things that may be going. Is it because, as the nursery rhyme says, "the sparrow killed cock robin with his bow and arrow," in some far-distant period of antiquity, that to this day the robin refuses so pertinaciously to have anything to do with his traditional foe? or does the robin consider himself an aristocrat and the sparrow a rough? Whatever the reason may be, no sparrow is admissible into the robin's society, or into that, as far as my observations extend, of any other bird whatever. Another difference of character between the robin and the sparrow deserves a word of notice. However often you

may feed the sparrow, and however well he may in consequence become acquainted with you, he is not to be induced to enter the house. The robin, on the contrary, after a little while, will hop in at the open window or door, and trust to your generosity and sense of honour not to molest or try to capture him. The sparrow, besides being distrustful, seems to be a pariah among the feathered race, the lowest of the low, the vulgarest of the vulgar, the slightest contact with whom is as contaminating as greased cartridges to a Sepoy. The sparrow, however, does not seem to take to heart the dislike with which he is regarded; and if other birds are to dine off the crumbs that my hand distributes, he takes especial care that he shall dine first, or, at all events, have the first pickings. He is not afraid of any of them, however large, and, in fact, does not seem to be afraid of anything but a man, a woman, a dog, or a cat. Once I noticed a rat venture, just as the sparrows had left the coast clear for a minute, to run off with a small piece of bread. Half a dozen sparrows immediately flew down from a tree, and chased him with vociferous twitterings, till he disappeared into his hole—not, however, discomfited, for he got clear off with his prize.

Though I feed the sparrows all the winter, they do not spare my garden in the spring and summer on that account. My gardener holds that I do mischief by my ill-judged kindness, and that I attract to the grounds a hundred sparrows for every one that would otherwise frequent them. However this may be, I know that they have not the smallest amount of gratitude, but, like human sinners, do those things which they ought not to do, and eat those things which I would much rather they let alone. They dig up with their bills the seed newly sown in the ground, especially the carrots, the turnips, the spinach, the parsnips, and the lettuces. Whether they watch with their sharp little eyes from some neighbouring tree the process of sowing the seed, and know where to go to in the gardener's absence, or whether, as the gardener says, they smell the seed in the ground, I am unable to say. I only know that they were very destructive in this respect till I employed a method to punish or prevent their depredations. The sparrow has very tender feet, and does not like to have them pricked or stung, either by pulverised glass, or by what is better for the purpose, the common prickly furze chopped small and strewed over the ground. Thus, whenever I sow seed which is in danger from the sparrows, I strew chopped furze over the place; and the sparrow after one trial at robbery gives over the attempt, and transfers his attentions to some one with less experience of his tricks than I have acquired. The sparrow is particularly fond of the first tender buds of gooseberry and currant bushes, which in the early spring he sometimes strip bare of their nascent leaves. He is also very partial to the young lettuces when they first appear above the ground, and as for peas, strawberries, cherries,

red and white currants, he is, as Buffon says, a veritable, though by no means an idle, glutton. Not being a farmer I cannot state from experience the damage he does to the ripening corn; but the French naturalist calculated that it would require twenty pounds of grain to keep a pair of sparrows for a year. This calculation presupposes that the birds should be kept in captivity, and fed with nothing else but corn; whereas the sparrow in his wild state is as omnivorous as man, and neither disdains fish, flesh, nor fowl, that has undergone the process of cooking; to say nothing of the living prey in the shape of worms, slugs, caterpillars, flies, moths, and butterflies, which when he can get them he is glad to make a meal of for himself, or distribute among his young ones. The farmers, as most people know, have a great objection to sparrows. In some parts of the country they enrol themselves into sparrow-clubs, for the purpose of exterminating these busy depredators, and in most parts of the country they employ small boys or young lads in the corn-fields to frighten them away, either by shouts or cries, or by the more effectual discharge of firearms. But the farmers are wrong in this matter; and the sparrow, thief though he be, is their benefactor.

Honest old Bewick, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, an excellent naturalist as well as an artist, says upon this subject:

"Most of the smaller birds are supported, especially when young, by a profusion of caterpillars, small worms, and insects; on these they feed, and thus they contribute to preserve the vegetable world from destruction. This is contrary to the commonly received opinion that birds, particularly *sparrows*, do much mischief in destroying the labours of the gardener and husbandman. It has been observed 'that a single pair of *sparrows*, during the time they are feeding their young, will destroy about *four thousand caterpillars weekly*.' They likewise feed their young with butterflies and other winged insects, each of which, if not destroyed in this manner, would be productive of several hundreds of caterpillars. Let us not condemn a whole species of animals because, in some instances, we have found them troublesome or inconvenient. Of this we are sufficiently sensible, but the uses to which they are subservient in the grand economical distribution of nature, we cannot so easily ascertain. We have already observed that, in the destruction of caterpillars, sparrows are eminently serviceable to vegetation, and in this respect alone, there is reason to suppose, sufficiently repay the destruction they make in the produce of the garden and the field."

In the United States of America and Canada, where there are no sparrows—and where few small birds can live unless in the wilderness—partly from the fact that every small boy from the age of eleven upwards is allowed to carry a gun, and blaze away at everything with wings, bigger than a butterfly or a humming bird, that comes within range of his weapon, the plague

of caterpillars, especially of that known as the "measure worm" is beyond conception to the dwellers in our more fortunate isles. In the hot summers—and it should be remembered that even the Northern States of America, enjoy (or suffer from) a climate similar to that of Spain or Morocco—the shade of trees is especially agreeable, and in the principal streets of the principal cities, the oleanthus, the elm, the maple and other trees are planted, both for their beauty and their utility. Unluckily the "measure worm," a vile, disgusting, black caterpillar, that breeds in incredible numbers, loves the trees also, and the early leaves no sooner expand than the "measurer" begins to disport himself by dangling from the boughs. It has often been proposed as a remedy for this filthy nuisance to introduce the European sparrow to prey upon the grubs. When the subject was lately mooted for the hundredth time, the leading journal of New York undertook to prove, that even if the sparrow could be acclimatised—which the writer seriously doubted—the cats of New York would prove too many for it and very speedily extirpate the foreign intruder. As, however, there are quite as many cats in London as in New York—perhaps ten times as many—and the sparrow still lives and thrives in our great city, in spite of an occasional meal made upon him by our hungry grimalkins, the argument of the New York editor was not founded upon a complete appreciation of the facts. The experiment was, and is, well worth the trying, as it is possible that the mania for killing such birds which besets the small boys of America, may be far more to blame than the murderous propensities of the cat, for the failure that has hitherto attended all the efforts made to introduce the sparrow to the house-roofs of our transatlantic cousins.* This seems the more probable, as an attempt to naturalise the sparrow in Australia has succeeded to the fullest degree. Mr. Edward Wilson consigned a large number of healthy birds to Melbourne. They were let loose immediately on arrival, and betook themselves to the tiles and the tree-tops; and, possibly because the little Australian boys have not yet been entrusted with firearms, or because the grimalkins—like themselves, a recent immigration to the antipodes—looked with as little concern upon sparrows in the new country as they did in the old, they speedily began to pair, and breed, and make themselves at home. So greatly have they flourished—it is to be hoped at the expense in the first instance of the gnats and the caterpillars—that the gardeners in the neighbourhood of Melbourne have begun to complain, just as gardeners and farmers foolishly do at home, of their depredations upon the peas and cherries.

The London sparrow, like other created

* These efforts are still in progress, and thousands of sparrows were let loose in the city of New York this last spring. To protect the birds against the severity of the winter, they are provided with little wooden houses, comically perched among the branches of the trees.

things, takes something of his colour from his habitat, and is a brown, dingy, dirty, smoky-hued featherling, compared with the country sparrow, in whose plumage white, and grey, and pure black, mingle harmoniously with the russet brown, which is the predominant colour of his livery. He has to make as hard a fight for his living as the "city Arab." There are no corn-fields to pillage, no orchards to rob, no succulent green peas or juicy cherries to be got. There is nothing for him but the refuse of men and animals; flies, spiders, earwigs, and all the vermin that haunt the crannies of old brickwork, or imbed themselves in the interstices of the slates and tiles. In the country he has human enemies, and a good many of them; in the town his only enemy is the cat. There is, it is true, a tradition that some poor Polish and other political refugees from the wars, revolutions, and intrigues of Continental Europe, who inhabit the foreign settlements around Leicester-square, are in the habit of setting traps and springes for the sparrows at the windows of their squalid attics, and eating them, in default sometimes of any other kind of food; but if this be the case, it is exceptional, and can make but slight inroad upon the security of almost the only small bird that lives in a state of nature and wild freedom in the metropolis. Among the Londoners the sparrow is rather a favourite than otherwise, and many a fair hand of child or woman in many a poor locality strews bread-crumbs on some humble balcony to attract the little dusky chirper to the window. The sparrows soon discover the places where such treats are provided, and learn to come regularly for their dinner or breakfast, if punctuality be one of the gifts of the donor.

Nature, all wise and beneficent, provided a means for keeping down the exuberant propagation of the sparrow, as of every other kind of life. The means were hawks, falcons, owls, and other birds of prey. Man, however, if he have not wholly, has almost extirpated these birds in England; and as a consequence, the sparrow has increased beyond due bounds. And if the farmers, for self-protection, do no more than thin the numbers of the sparrow at certain seasons of the year, without waging a war of annihilation against him, they will do no more than supply the place in the wise economy of nature, which would have been filled by the carnivorous birds, which sportsmen—real or pretended—have not allowed to find a home in our hills and valleys. The herring as we all know is a very excellent fish; but it is so prolific that a single pair produces in one season a progeny to be numbered by hundreds of thousands. If there were no check to its increase in the shape, not alone of the fishermen, but of the whales and other fish that devour them by myriads, the deep sea itself would in the course of a score or two of years, become as thick as barley broth, with this one form of life to the exclusion of others. So of the sparrow. He is an excellent bird in his

way, and earns the grain that he consumes by his services in the destruction of insects which are much greater enemies to the crop than he is. It is only when he becomes too many for the work to be done that the thinning of his number becomes justifiable.

POLLY'S ONE OFFER.

IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

BOB was quite *that* sort of person. He had taken a fancy to Polly—everybody in the house had taken a fancy to Polly; but, with the exception of Mrs. Livingstone, no one treated her with the respect that was her due. She seemed made for kisses, caresses, teasing, and spoiling, and petting—for anything but grave airs and work. Of course, Polly did not see herself in the light of a good joke, very far from it, and yet she was happy in the atmosphere of kindly sarcasm that surrounded her. They were all so good to her, so easy and pleasant, and Bob and his mother especially. Mrs. Livingstone drew her on to talk of herself, and approved of what she heard of the principles and practical sense of the young creature.

"Yes, I know I am pretty, but children will like me all the better for it, so I am glad," said she, in reply to some comment on her beauty. "Miss Mill, an old governess near us, thought I might wear spectacles, but the oculist said if I did not require them they would permanently injure my eyes, and I was not going to suffer that. I did alter my hair and cut a lot off, which rather went to my heart, but it will take less time to do, and people who only see me with it plain will never know how much nicer I look in curls. And, besides, I don't think anybody calls me pretty except those who are fond of me. And, after all, I can't help it, and I am not inclined to starve or be a burden on Jane because of my face. I dare say it will prove quite as serviceable a face as if it began by being ugly—governesses age so fast; Jane has some white hairs already."

"But you may marry, dear. Don't you ever dream of a husband and children and house of your own? My girls do, and it is most natural," said Mrs. Livingstone.

"My mother does not approve of marrying," said Polly, calmly. "I used to think I should like it, but since I have heard how much there is to be borne from men, and what trouble in the bringing up of children, I am sure I shall be better out of it, and I have turned my mind to other things. Jane had an offer once, but my mother would not consent; and she has given up caring. We shall teach as long as we can, and when we have saved up money enough we shall live together and be two old maids. All my ambition now is to be a good governess."

"I wish you'd come and be mine, Polly," said Bob, who, entering as she spoke, had caught the last words. "You have no notion what a good boy I should be under wise and judicious guidance, though I am nothing to boast of under present misrule. The fact is, they don't

know how to manage me. Say yes, Polly." But Polly only laughed at his air of meek entreaty, and his mother told him Polly had not courage to undertake such a rough handful as he was, and he must apply elsewhere.

That evening Polly played on the piano, and sang distractingly. There was no end of her accomplishments. Bob listened till he loved her, till he longed to do as Maggie did, and hug her up and kiss her for pure kindness and pity that she was destined ever to be anything but a pet and darling. That was the state of mind into which she threw many people, while she herself was feeling all the time quite strong and capable and equal to her fortunes.

In this way the week went on. It was fine weather, but Bob contrived to be much more than usual about the house. He was even troublesome occasionally, as one morning, for instance, when there were custards to make, and it was Maggie's turn in the kitchen. Maggie would have Polly with her, and just when she was standing at the end of the long white table inquiring where she should sit to see, and yet not be in anybody's way, Bob appeared, lifted her up, and set her on the table. "Sit there," said he, and then took a small corner for himself close by, and supported his long length with one foot on the floor and one arm round Polly's waist. Such a thing had never happened to Polly before as to be made a prop of, and she felt that it was excruciatingly wrong for a governess (oh, if her mother or Miss Mill could see her!); but, at the same time, the very novelty of the circumstance made it difficult to extricate herself without compromising her dignity. She pretended not to be aware of the arm, though she was blushing and palpitating all over, and looking at the floor ever so far below her feet, she said, "Let me get down, please."

"You are quite safe; you can't fall while I am here," replied Bob, purposely misunderstanding her.

"But I don't like it; I am not used to it," persisted Polly, vexed and ashamed of herself, she hardly knew why.

"Like it!" echoed Bob, in a voice of tender concern. "Like what?"

Polly turned her face and looked at him with sudden tears in her eyes. He would have liked to say or do something rash, but he only took his arm away and moved off to the hearth. It was impossible to withstand that touching appeal, which said plainly, "You are my host, and should protect me, not offend me." Polly gazed out of the window for several minutes after, but he saw the burning rose on her face and one tear splashed down on her hand. Maggie seemed not to notice this byplay, and went singing to the dairy, upon which Bob drew hastily near to Polly and begged her not to be angry. "I would not vex you for the world," pleaded he. "Say you forgive me." Polly did not say anything distinctly, but he understood that his peace was made; and when he heard Maggie coming back he took his departure. "And a good riddance too," observed Maggie:

"the custards would certainly have been ruined if he had stayed."

In the evening Polly sang again, and Bob, who had quite recovered his native audacity, proclaimed that he would have a singing wife or none. Why did not his sisters sing? They could do nothing. Polly could do everything.

"Yes, Polly's a clever little midge," said Maggie, tenderly enfolding her; "but you need not take the trouble to set your cap at her, Bob; for she has made up her mind already; she is going to be an old maid."

Bob laughed aloud, and seemed immensely tickled in his imagination. "She looks like it, very much like it indeed!" said he. "I should think so! Polly an old maid! That would be a sin and a shame!"

Polly blushed, and said, curtly, she wished they would talk sense, and let her alone. What business was it of Bob's, or Maggie's either, for that matter, what she was? As a governess and a working woman, of course she had other things to think of that made her serious, very different to them, who had been born with silver spoons in their mouths. These sentiments, and the tone of them, and their slight incoherence, quite upset Bob's gravity. He laughed long and merrily, and only recovered himself when Polly sprang up in a tempest and rushed to the door to escape. Then, with one rapid movement, he overtook and stopped her, and begged her pardon with pleas enough to soften a heart of adamant. But Polly's was harder than adamant. "I am not a baby; you treat me like a baby!" gasped she, crimson and furious. "I won't be called a mouse! My name is Mary Curtis!" Mrs. Livingstone was not present to keep order, but Maggie knew by Polly's way that she was really hurt and mortified; so she interfered, and bade Bob let her alone; she was not used to be teased.

"Then it is good for her—rub the starch out," replied he, exasperatingly, and went so far in his teasing that Polly, quite beside herself with passion, struck him in the waistcoat with all her little might. It was a mistake, as Bob instructed her the next minute, kissing her roughly, and then as roughly letting her go. The instant she was released, she ran across the hall, half blinded with tears, and, after tripping and stumbling twice or thrice on the stairs in the dark, gained the safe refuge of Maggie's room, where Maggie found her presently, weeping fit to break her heart. Polly's self-respect was grievously wounded; if she could not make Bob behave to her like a lady, what was to become of her amongst children! Maggie was perplexed. The ways and customs of Blackthorn Grange admitted of a good deal of kissing amongst friends, but Polly evidently considered a kiss a mortal offence. She essayed to comfort her by representing the fact in its local light.

"Don't make such a fuss, Polly; one would think you were half killed," said she. "What does a kiss matter? and it was only Bob."

"He is a perfect bear!" sobbed Polly. "I wish I had never come!"

"You cross little savage thing! And it is not very polite to tell me Bob's a bear! He is nothing of the kind. You ought to feel flattered; he would not plague you if he did not think you nice. Maria Spinks was here a whole month, and he never offered to kiss her once."

Polly dried her eyes and looked up. "He is so abominably rough," she began, and then was scared into silence at the recollection of the blow *she* had given *him*, which, strictly speaking, was far more in the nature of an assault than a kiss.

"Ah, you may well stop and bethink yourself of his provocation," said Maggie, significantly.

"Did I hurt him?" asked Polly, with lovely wistfulness.

"Dreadfully! How could you help it, hitting him as you did purposely in the region of the heart? And Bob is very delicate. It is easy to be sorry for it afterwards, but that is the way people get into passions, and commit murder, or manslaughter, at least."

"I wish I could go away to-morrow before breakfast," said Polly, ready to sink with shame and self-reproach.

"That is impossible. You will just have to do penance and sit by Bob, and if you take my advice you will behave as usual, and say nothing about to-night. It is lucky my mother was not there; she would never forgive you for hurting Bob."

"I'm sure I won't mention it, Maggie; I think I should die if anybody else knew," said Polly, ruefully. "It has made me feel so small and contemptible. If I had only remembered myself and kept my temper it would not have happened."

"Nonsense; it can't be helped now; think of the old song—'If a body kiss a body, need a body cry?' If you had been here at our New Year's party, you might have been kissed a dozen times under the mistletoe, if Bob had not intimated that he would not stand it; nothing varies more in kind and degree than a kiss, you know."

"I don't know; but I want no more of Bob's kind and degree; my cheek and chin are red yet."

"Well, don't complain—it is your own fault; you may be sure it is when I tell you so," said Maggie; and Polly held her peace.

It was difficult next morning when Polly went down to breakfast a minute or two late. Mrs. Livingstone offered her cheek to her, and Bob, with not a little extra colour in his face, gave her a cordial, expressive shake of the hand. Maggie had reported Polly's wrath and distress in unmitigated terms, and Bob was sorry he had been "a perfect bear," and "so abominably rough." She was much too shy and conscious to talk in her wonted way, and he perceived he had gone too far and frightened her—and heartily vexed at himself he was for his blundering stupidity. He transgressed in the opposite direction that day, and was as tenderly assiduous as a lover; Polly did not appreciate his kindness, but seeing that his repentance for his great

offence was deep and unfeigned, she forgave him fully and freely—so fully that when he took his leave of her at the Warden House, whither he had driven her and Maggie over in his dog-cart, and said humbly: "We are friends again, Polly, are we not? And you will come again at Easter?"

Polly, with a rosy beneficent countenance shining on him, replied: "Yes—if I may."

CHAPTER IV.

POLLY'S adventures at the Warden House were passed chiefly in the school-room. The children were reasonably good, and Mrs. Stapylton was abundantly satisfied with her new governess's cheerfulness, skill, and industry; but the first time she sounded her praises to her husband, the captain replied: "Don't expect to keep the little woman long, my dear. She is uncommonly pretty, and I am very much mistaken if Bob Livingstone is not sweet on her; he always inquires after her so amiably when we meet at the market table."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Stapylton; and the next time the meet was at the Warden House, she bade her husband invite Bob to ride over the previous day and sleep; and she contrived to have a lady short at dinner, and asked Polly to be so kind as to leave lessons for once and fill the gap; for she was an amiable woman, married after her own heart, and would be glad, as she said, to give such a nice little thing a chance.

Polly had the sagacity to leave her profession up-stairs, and to come down charming in her white dress and white ribbons, but Bob felt it was not quite like having her to himself at Blackthorn Grange. Yet she was much easier here, and talked and was as gay as any one. There was nothing in Polly to provoke or invite an impertinence. The ladies made no difference with her, and her face was enough to ensure her kindness at first sight from men. If Bob was a person to be influenced by other people's opinions, he heard many golden ones of Polly at the Warden House, and all casually expressed without reference to him. Perhaps he did carry away an idea or two of her more meaning than any he brought—Maggie certainly believed it, and began to insinuate the same in her letters to her friend; but Polly was heedless and indifferent to Bob, and her work and duty were much more in her head than "nonsense," which sufficiently accounted for her never responding to Maggie's hints and queries.

Easter did not linger, but was soon come, bringing with it Polly's second visit to the Grange. It was a lovely Easter that year—warm, sunny, serene as May, with hedges green, pear-trees and cherry-trees in blossom, and even roses in bud under the shelter of the eaves on the south wall of the old house. They made it quite a gay season at Blackthorn Grange, and Polly, whose dignities had worn easier already, entered into it with all the natural joyousness of her temper and time of life. She was exceedingly pleasant about the house, and the many visitors, kinsfolk, and neighbours,

who came there during her stay, were charmed, and regarded her with a significant interest which none of the family discouraged. Mrs. Livingstone would walk her about the great walled garden for an hour at a time, talking to her no one but themselves knew what about, but the two were excellent company to each other, and often Bob made a third. Laura was rather quizzical on the subject of Maggie's friend and her brother, but that was her disagreeable way, and Fanny and Maggie made up to them for it by all sorts of little consideratenesses, which they profited by without observing. And every day some excursion was planned which threw them together. Now it was to Cranstown Rocks, now to Haviland Priory, and one day, the most memorable of all, to Beech Grove, the Livingstones' ancestral manor, Bob's inheritance, where Maggie informed Polly that he would most likely go to live when he married and settled. It was an old place, though not so old as the Grange, and it had fallen into some neglect from having been let to a careless tenant, whose lease was, however, nearly run out; but as Polly said: "With a little trouble and taste, it might be made beautiful." Bob asked how she would go about to improve it, and as he trotted her through the rooms and the garden, he treasured up all her little views and opinions, which she was perfectly free with, not at all as if they were a matter of personal concern. And, perhaps, they were not. Polly had a faculty for planning and suggesting, but she was not conscious of any peculiar sentiment for the place as Bob's future home, though everybody, himself included, gave her credit for it.

And very happy Bob was in his illusion. Polly was quite kind enough to please him, and her shy trick of blushing, and her sudden vivacities and caprices soon charmed his heart away entirely. And hers? She was a mystery to herself; she liked Bob; she liked to be near him; once, when he took her by surprise and kissed her, she was not so furious but that he thought he might some day venture again; in fact, if she had given way to nature, she would have loved him very sweetly and tenderly. But all her principles were against giving way, and whenever she felt inclined to lapse into weakness, she would recite to herself all her mother's litany of impediments, and pains and penalties in marriage. This sufficiently proved her in danger, and set her on her guard against it, poor little Polly!

The Easter visit was extended to a fortnight, and before half of it was over, the servants in the house, the men on the farm, the very dogs even had learnt to demean themselves to Polly as to a little lady in whom their master had a special interest. Mrs. Livingstone, Laura, Fanny, and Bob's two chief bachelor friends were ready with their consent whenever it might be required; and in the absence of the principals would discuss their private affairs without the smallest delicacy or reserve. Only Maggie held herself in an attitude of doubt, and this Laura

treated as the supremest affectation. "You know your precious Polly will say 'Yes' the very first minute Bob asks her, and be only too glad!" the quizzical sister would tauntingly aver; to which Maggie would make answer that she only wished she was as sure of it as Laura appeared to be.

But Maggie could be sure of nothing. Polly was a puzzle and trial to her at this moment, and she was constantly trying to solve her by all manner of cunning experiments and questions. On their last evening together she went so far as to say in the privacy of their bedroom: "I fancied once you were going to be fond of Bob for my sake, Polly, and I'm disappointed in you. You are not half good to him, you little cross thing, and you look him in the face as frankly as any of us—that's a sign you don't care for him: tiresome toad that you are!"

"Bob's eyes are blue," said Polly, with abstraction, but as coolly as if she were repeating "two and two are four."

"You have no particular prejudice against blue eyes, have you?" inquired Maggie, in a tone of affront.

"No! you dear old Maggie, why should I? Yours are blue."

After a brief silence Maggie returned to the charge: "You are coming to see us again at Midsummer—now you need not seek any excuse, for I won't take it! You are coming to see us again at Midsummer. Say *yes*, or don't open your mouth." Polly kept her mouth shut. "Have you been struck dumb? You are coming, I know you are! I'll never be friends with you again if you don't." Polly's lips still never stirred. "O, Polly, don't be a silly little donkey! Look here—is there anybody loves you as much as I do, unless it be dear old Bob? and you are going to throw it all to the winds!"

"Yes, there's Jane loves me, and I must spend my Midsummer at home with her and my mother," said Polly, thus solemnly adjured.

"That's all right; but you'll come *here* first—*promise*—I'll shake you if you don't."

Polly did not exactly promise, but she begged off her shaking with something Maggie accepted as an equivalent; and in the morning, when she was driven off to her duties at the Warden House by Bob himself, it was considered an understood thing that at Midsummer, before going home to Norminster, she should pay another visit to Blackthorn Grange. It was a lovely April day, with the sun in full glow, and the orchards all pink and white with apple-blossom. The country was very fine and luxuriant between the Grange and Lanswood, and Polly's eyes and soul took delight in its spring beauty. She was feeling happy, unconsciously happy, and the radiance of her heart shone in her countenance. Maggie, at whom she often looked round, thought she had never seen her so sweetly pretty before; and Bob, though his plan of courtship was all laid out,

and he had no intention of being precipitate, found himself more than once on the brink of asking the question which would decide both their fortunes.

"You would not mind spending your life in the country, Polly, little town-bred lady as you are?" said he, gaily.

"I like the country best," replied Polly.

"When you come to us at Midsummer, I shall have Stella ready, and you shall learn to ride—all the girls ride hereabouts."

"But they ride from children. I am rather timid; I am not sure that I shall like it."

"I shall teach you myself," said Bob, as if that would remove all difficulties, and he glanced down at the little creature beside him with fond admiration. None of her friends' opinions of Polly had yet grown up to her own estimate of her dignity—not even Bob's. He laughed indulgently at her practical airs, and called her his Mouse and his Blossom, with a tender patronage that she could not repress, though she sincerely wished to do so. It seemed to Polly sometimes as if his will were the stronger, and controlled hers, however she fought against it; and that was the fact. Bob was not a particularly profound person, but he perfectly fathomed Polly's mixture of pride and shyness, lovingness, doubt, fear, and trembling towards himself, and he believed it quite in his duty and business to tame her with kindness, yet firmness—much as he was taming his beautiful shy filly, Stella; as for letting her go her own way, or supposing she would defeat him in the end, it never entered Bob's head; and had her mother's warnings and philosophy been laid before him, they would have been far too strange and unnatural for his honest comprehension. He religiously believed that every nice young woman wished to be married, and why not Polly, who was so extremely nice?

The drive to Lanswood was very pleasant all the way, and when Polly was left behind at the Warden House, to think it over, she could not but know why it had been so. Love is the best of companions. "Dear old Bob, I'm afraid I should grow foolishly fond of him if I went often to Blackthorn Grange. I had much better stop away at Midsummer," said she, to herself; but perhaps she did not mean it. She was rather dull and absent for a day or two, but she soon brightened up at her work, which was not severe or disagreeable. In truth, her situation was very comfortable, and she had no injuries or hardships to make the notion of escape welcome; but still she counted the weeks to the holidays, and did not grieve to see them pass. And in every letter Maggie told her how much nearer Midsummer was, and mentioned many delightful parties of pleasure and excursions which were standing over until her coming. At every such allusion Polly's heart underwent that physical spasm which she had described to her friend as afflicting her before

she set forth on her career as a governess. To go or not to go to the Grange became her thought by day and night. She was pulled very hard both ways. She did not deny to herself that the Grange was a happy place for a holiday; but her principles of so many years' careful home cultivation were in peril there, while her head still approved of them so entirely that she felt it was inconsistent and wrong to walk into temptation with her eyes open and her judgment unobscured. Nobody at the Grange denounced marriage as a state of suffering bondage, or children as a perpetual care; indeed, Laura and Fanny were both engaged, and Maggie, though not so far gone as they were, frankly avowed that she had only refused the curate because she did not like him; if she had liked him she should have had no scruple about accepting his proposal, and taking her luck for what might follow.

Polly had no notion of casting her burden on other people's shoulders, or she might have appealed to Jane for counsel in the case; besides, she was fond of deciding for herself, or rather of drifting into decisions which were generally in accordance with her inclinations, secret or expressed. In this manner she drifted into a decision that she would go to Blackthorn Grange, but it should be for the last time; and a few days after, there she was, in all her pretty dignity and grace, and everybody in and about the house was talking about her and the master, and drawing only one conclusion from this third visit within the half-year.

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